DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 359 329 CE 063 511

AUTHOR	Barker, Kathryn Chang
TITLE	Adult Literacy in Canada in 1992: Initiatives, Issues and Imperatives. A Report Prepared for the Prosperity Secretariat.
INSTITUTION	Department of Industry, Science and Technology, Ottawa (Ontario).
PUB DATE	Jun 92
NOTE	117p.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Research/Technical (143)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC05 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Adult Basic Education; *Adult Literacy; Adult Programs; Canada Natives; *Change Strategies; *Educational Needs; Educational Policy; Educational Research; Educational Resources; Foreign Countries; Guidelines; Immigrants; *Literacy Education; Needs Assessment; Policy Formation; *Program Improvement; Questionnaires; *Research Needs; State of the Art Reviews
IDENTIFIERS	*Canada; Workplace Literacy

ABSTRACT

This study examined current initiatives related to adult literacy in Canada. A literature search, interviews with government personnel, telephone surveys, faxed questionnaires, and interviews with key individuals were used to assess four kinds of initiatives (teaching/learning opportunities, support to programs, policy development, and advocacy/public education) directed at four target groups: basic illiterates, illiterates in the workforce, immigrants, and aboriginal groups. The unmet needs and issues of concern to Canada's literacy education community were identified, and 12 recommendations were developed from the perspective of adult literacy stakeholders. The overview and needs assessment confirmed that Canada's adult literacy problem is a national, expensive, long-term, and complicated problem requiring national leadership and coordination to support and increase the involvement of the literacy community, researchers, policymakers, and advocates in the development and implementation of a national policy on adult literacy and basic education that incorporates the complex nature of literacy as an educational, social, economic, and political issue. Appendixes include details of the data-gathering methodology, an inventory of research in Canada, a sampling of Canadian literacy resources, a 31-item annotated bibliography, the faxed literacy community survey, and guidelines for creating an adult literacy policy. (Contains 118 references.) (MN)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED359329

ADULT LITERACY IN CANADA IN 1992:

INITIATIVES, ISSUES AND IMPERATIVES

A Report

Prepared For The Prosperity Secretariat

By

Kathryn Chang Barker
Kathryn Chang Consulting

June 1992

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

H Gasewicz

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

CE063511

Steering Group on Prosperity

PROSPERITY INITIATIVE

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY iv

1. INTRODUCTION 1

1.1 THE FOUR PURPOSES OF THE REPORT ARE 1
1.2 THE PROCESS OF INFORMATION GATHERING FOR THE CREATION OF THE REPORT HAS INCLUDED THE FOLLOWING 2
1.3 THE REPORT CONTAINS THE FOLLOWING SIX PARTS 2

2. RATIONALE: Background to the Report 4

2.1 THE PROBLEM OF ADULT ILLITERACY 4
2.2 THE COSTS OF ADULT ILLITERACY 5
2.3 AN ALTERNATE PERSPECTIVE: READABILITY AS A PROBLEM 5
2.4 APPROACHES TO THE PROBLEM 6
2.5 WHY NOW? 7

3. INVENTORY OF INITIATIVES 9

3.1 TEACHING/LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES 9
3.2 PROGRAM SUPPORT 10

3.2.1 Support From Professional Organizations 11
3.2.2 Information And Teaching Resources 11
3.2.3 Research 12

3.3 POLICY DEVELOPMENT 12
3.4 ADVOCACY AND PUBLIC EDUCATION 13

4. ASSESSMENT OF INITIATIVES 15

4.1 IN GENERAL 15

4.1.1 Among The Many Achievements Are 15
4.1.2 Progress To Date 15
4.1.3 Expression Of Public Concerns 16

TABLE OF CONTENTS (Cont'd)

Page

4.2 FOUR SPECIFIC TARGET AREAS 17

4.2.1 Basic Illiteracy 17
4.2.2 Immigrants And Literacy 17
4.2.3 Literacy And Illiteracy In The Workplace 18
4.2.4 Literacy And Aboriginal Peoples 21

5. ISSUES, CONCERNS AND UNMET NEEDS 24

5.1 POLICY-RELATED ISSUES 25

5.1.1 The Need For Co-ordination Of Efforts 25
5.1.2 The Issue Of Definitions 26
5.1.3 Relationships With Other Social Problems 27
5.1.4 Special Needs Groups 28
5.1.5 Public Perceptions 28

5.2 OVERARCHING PROBLEMS AND UNMET NEEDS 30

5.2.1 Funding Issues 30
5.2.2 Lack of Research 31
5.2.3 The Need For Student Involvement 32
5.2.4 Partnerships 33
5.2.5 A Stalemate To Overcome 34

5.3 PROGRAM-RELATED ISSUES AND CONCERNS 35

5.3.1 Student Recruitment, Retention And Achievement 36
5.3.2 Student Mobility, Transferability And Certification 38
5.3.3 Personnel And Working Conditions 38
5.3.4 Teaching Materials And Approaches 40
5.3.5 Use Of Technology 41
5.3.6 Evaluation And Accountability 41

5.4 ISSUES RELATED TO PREVENTION 44

5.4.1 Youth-At-Risk 44
5.4.2 Educational Reform 45
5.4.3 Lifelong Learning Culture 46

5.5 RESPONSE FROM THE LITERACY COMMUNITY 48

5.6 ADDRESSING THE ISSUES, CONCERNS AND UNMET NEEDS 50

TABLE OF CONTENTS (Cont'd)

Page

6. RECOMMENDATIONS 52

7. REFERENCES 66

APPENDICES

A - Details of Methodology in Data Gathering 76

B - An Inventory of Research in Canada 80

C - A Sampling of Canadian Literacy Resources 84

D - Annotated Bibliography 88

E - Faxed Survey to Literacy Community 97

F - Creating Adult Literacy Policy 105

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In Canada, there is a serious problem of adult illiteracy. The four purposes of this report have been to overview the initiatives directed at remediation of this problem; to assess the initiatives directed at four specific targets (basic illiteracy, immigrant literacy, literacy in the workplace, and literacy for aboriginal peoples); to surface issues and concerns; and to make recommendations.

The problem of adult illiteracy has three major components: the remedial component aimed at upgrading the skills of those adults in need of learning opportunities; the preventative component aimed at reducing the numbers of young people with literacy skill deficits; and the facilitative component aimed at making information accessible through plain language. This report focusses largely on the first component.

The initiatives directed at remediation, then, fall into four categories: teaching/learning opportunities; support to those programs in the form of professional development, research, and materials development; policy development; and advocacy and public education.

In the assessment of initiatives directed at the four target groups, it becomes clear that significantly different issues surface for each. This reinforces the need for unique and diverse approaches to remediation for each group.

The issues and concerns expressed in the literature of the field and by the literacy community group loosely into four categories: policy-related concerns, explicitly, the need for co-ordination of efforts, the issue of definitions, the relationship to other social problems, special needs groups, and public perceptions; overarching issues such as funding, research, student involvement, partnerships and the current stalemate; program-related concerns, specifically related to student achievement, staffing and working conditions, materials and approaches, the use of technology, evaluation and accountability; and issues related to prevention, for example, concerns with youth-at-risk, educational reform, and development of a lifelong learning culture.

Twelve specific recommendations are made that reflect the fact that the adult illiteracy problem is a national, expensive, long-term, complicated problem requiring commensurate solutions. At the same time, illiteracy is an individual problem and solutions must respect the needs of the students for dignity, support and incentives. National policy and goals, innovation and collaboration, program excellence and student achievement, adequate funding and access to technology, and educational reform are all recommended.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This document is a report commissioned by the Prosperity Secretariat, supervised by Consulting and Audit Canada, and prepared by Kathryn Chang Barker of Kathryn Chang Consulting.

1.1 THE FOUR PURPOSES OF THE REPORT ARE:

1. to overview current initiatives related to adult literacy in Canada, i.e.

    - the programs directed at adults with literacy problems,
    - the research, resources and staff development that provide support to programs,
    - policy development and implementation, and
    - advocacy and public education efforts;

2. to assess those initiatives directed at four specific target groups, specifically

    - basic illiterates,
    - illiterates in the workforce,
    - immigrants, and
    - aboriginal groups;

3. to present, from the perspective of the adult literacy community, unmet needs, concerns and issues; and

4. to make recommendations for action, from the perspective of the literacy stakeholders.

1.2 THE PROCESS OF INFORMATION GATHERING FOR THE CREATION OF THE REPORT HAS INCLUDED THE FOLLOWING:

1. a survey of the general literature in the field of adult literacy, nationally and internationally;

2. a specific review of the literature related to Canadian issues and initiatives;

3. an explicit review of the literature related to Canadian research in the field;

4. an extensive search of the National Adult Literacy Database;

5. telephone surveys of individuals and organizations with questions related to adult literacy initiatives in Canada;

6. a faxed questionnaire, with questions related to issues and recommendations, to a large number and variety of individuals;

7. a brief questionnaire of provincial literacy consultants; and

8. personal interviews with key individuals.

More detail about methodology of information gathering is contained in Appendix A.

1.3 THE REPORT CONTAINS THE FOLLOWING SIX PARTS:

1. an introduction to the concept of adult literacy, i.e.

    - the problem of adult illiteracy.
    - definitions and statistics.
    - related problems and issues.

2. an overview of the current initiatives directed at adult literacy in Canada, i.e. a rationale for the report.

3. an assessment of the initiatives, in general, and specifically directed at the four target groups stipulated above.

4. issues, concerns and unmet needs identified in the literature and in the opinion of the literacy community.

5. recommendations for action as identified by the literature and by the stakeholders in the field.

6. six appendixes, i.e. details of the methology in data gathering; an inventory of current research initiatives in Canada; a sampling of resources available as support to literacy programs in Canada; an annotated bibliography; the outcome of the faxed questionaire; and an extended discussion of policy creation specific to adult literacy.

CHAPTER 2

RATIONALE: Background to the Report

2.1 THE PROBLEM OF ADULT ILLITERACY

The Canadian public has been made aware that significant numbers of adults may be functionally illiterate and that there are serious repercussions for individuals and for Canadian society.

- Thomas (1983) estimated that 20 percent of Canadian adults are functionally illiterate based on the Unesco definition of functional literacy being the attainment of a Grade 9 education.

- Calamai (1987) claimed that 24 percent were functionally illiterate based on the ability to complete some contemporary Canadian literacy tasks.

- In 1989, Statistics Canada determined, through the Survey of Literacy Skills Used in Daily Activities, that 38 percent of Canadians aged 16 to 69 have varying degrees of difficulty with commonplace reading tasks.

Numerous conflicting definitions and measures of adult illiteracy have been developed and used (Thomas 1989). Although the general populace thinks of illiteracy as the total inability to read and write, the problem of illiteracy in industrialized countries is not at this level. Very few Canadian adults are totally illiterate. However, very many do not have the advanced literacy skills required to function fully in the context of an industrialized economic and social environment.

What these adults require is not basic literacy instruction but opportunities for remedial basic education: educational programming in basic academic, life and employment skills, from the level of basic literacy to the equivalent of high school completion. While the term Adult Basic Education (ABE) is not a substitute for adult literacy, it is a label that may be better applied to the nature and extent of the adult illiteracy problem in Canada. Like basic education for youth, ABE is the foundation for adults to participate fully in the life and work of their community (Chang 1988; Thomas 1989).

Despite the different measurement methodologies and different statistics, it is clear that many adults have inadequate literacy skills and they need attention.

2.2 THE COSTS OF ADULT ILLITERACY

Canadians have become aware that there are enormous personal and societal costs to adult illiteracy.

- According to Calamai (1987) and others, individuals who need literacy skill development are deprived of the psychological, sociological, economic and political strengths and abilities provided by literacy that functionally literate adults take for granted.

- Illiteracy is a problem for taxpayers and governments: the Canadian Business Task Force on Literacy (1988) has estimated that functional illiteracy indirectly costs society approximately $10.7 billion annually in Canada, in expenditures related to occupational health and safety, direct training for employment, lost earnings of the unemployed, unemployment expenses and prisons.

- As well, illiteracy is a problem for business and industry for whom direct costs approximate $4.2 billion annually in expenditures related to industrial accidents, lost productivity and direct training (CBTFL 1988).

- The problems of illiteracy, innumeracy and lack of other basic skills are frequently cited as barriers to productivity increase and effective human resource development. According to the Conference Board of Canada (1990), 70 per cent of Canadian businesses considered illiteracy to be a problem for their operations. Over 30 per cent of respondents indicated that literacy deficits impeded general training and/or the acquisition of new and advanced skills. Surprisingly, only 24 per cent had a specific policy to deal with them; however, 36 per cent of responding firms indicated that they had a pre-employment test to screen out illiterates and innumerates.

For these and other reasons, the incidence of adult functional illiteracy has become an area of concern.

2.3 AN ALTERNATE PERSPECTIVE: READABILITY AS A PROBLEM

From a different perspective, it is not the individuals and their lack of skills that cause the problems, it is the level of literacy demands and tasks that may be inappropriate.

On the one hand, many literacy tasks are unnecessarily difficult. For example, Alberta Consumer and Corporate Affairs has rewritten much of the public information brochures intended for average citizens because the level was inappropriately high.

On the other hand, individuals may be expected to possess skill levels as entry to certain jobs or training programs for which that skill is not required. That the level of literacy skill demanded is not commensurate with the level used screens people into problem categories in some circumstances. From this point of view, the problem is not individuals but literacy demands and actual literacy tasks.

Not only do the representative literacy tasks of contemporary society pose problems for some adults, the skill levels of literacy tasks are increasing and changing rapidly (Levine 1990). This creates the additional problem of preparing for increased future requirements by those who may have barely adequate skills at this time.

2.4 APPROACHES TO THE PROBLEM

Adult illiteracy and the costs it generates are viewed from a large number and variety of conceptual perspectives.

- From the point of view of the ministries of Education and many others, it is an educational issue.
- Others, such as the unemployed and underemployed and ministries of Training and Employment, view it as an employment-related problem.
- The Secretary of State for Citizenship and Multiculturalism relates basic literacy and life skills to human rights and citizenship.
- To business and industry, it is both an economic problem and a health/safety problem.
- Agencies dealing with public health, mental health and families see the costs to the well-being of individuals, especially their children.

Literacy represents very different concepts to anthropologists, psychologists, political scientists, economists, labor organizations, peace activists, educators, environmentalists, employers, lawyers and countless others.

2.5 WHY NOW?

In Canada, as in many industrialized countries, people have begun to "worry" about the fact that a significant number of adults are unable to read and write at a level commensurate with the literacy demands of contemporary society (Calamai 1987; Chisholm 1988).

- Educators and taxpayers worry about the effectiveness of their school systems (Holmes 1989; Lortie 1990; OECD 1989; Wolfe 1990).

- Educators of adults worry about how best to teach basic skills to adults (Fingeret and Jurmo 1989).

- The business community is worried that functionally illiterate workers cause business and industry to be less competitive (Carnevale, Gainer and Meltzer 1990; Rubenson 1989; Limage 1990).

- Policy makers are worried about how best to address the growing public pressure for remediation opportunities for educationally disadvantaged adults (Chisman 1989; Darville 1988).

- Governmental advisors and bureaucrats are worrying about finances and resource allocation (Brizius & Foster 1987; Rubenson 1989).

- Researchers and policy implementors are concerned with how to define literacy in such a way so as to facilitate action (Chisman and Associates 1990; Thomas 1990; Wagner 1990).

All of these worries provide the basis or rationale for this report.

At the same time, the context for the problem or the current political, social and economic environment in Canada is characterized by mounting pressures.

- All levels of government are pressured to control the mounting fiscal deficit, to be financially accountable, and to priorize cost items.

- Educational institutions are pressured to produce a more literate graduate and to deal with students at all levels experiencing literacy deficits.

- Services to the unemployed, institutionalized, welfare recipients and the otherwise dependent, and services addressing public, mental and occupational health, are all experiencing mounting pressures to "do more with less".

- Average citizens are pressured to become active volunteers and philanthropists as part of the solution to pressures on "the system".

- Students and workers are pressured to attain higher levels of formal qualifications, greater literacy and technological skills, and a more fulfilling lifestyle.

These pressures combine to create a stressful environment in which resources are stretched and dwindling, alternatives are not readily available, large numbers of Canadians are being marginalized by skill deficiencies, and significant problems are being created for Canadian business, government and taxpayers.

The environment is also characterized by change. Some of the worries and pressures are created by such changes as those listed by King and Schneider (1991) in the Club of Rome report:

- rapid change in economic theories and functions,
- an unprecedented interdependence of nations,
- the deteriorating environment, and
- the advance of high technologies.

In adult and post-secondary education in particular, some notable changes are:

- the technologically-driven demand for training and retraining,

- a different student population at post-secondary institutions (i.e. more women, more older students),

- demands for flexibility in educational programming, and

- demands for accountability at all levels.

Within this scenario, then, we find that an alarming number of adult Canadians do not have adequate literacy skills to cope with the current pressures for change or to contribute to the solutions. The current standard of living enjoyed by Canadians, the high degree of prosperity we take for granted, is in jeopardy when a high percentage of adults and a growing number of adolescents are not able to contribute fully to aspects of their communities.

CHAPTER 3

INVENTORY OF INITIATIVES

In recognition of the problem of adult illiteracy in Canada, the following four types of initiatives have been undertaken:

1. teaching/learning opportunities;
2. support to programs (i.e. professional development for staff, teaching resources and research);
3. policy development, institutionally, federally and provincially; and
4. advocacy and public education.

3.1 TEACHING/LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

The most common view of the problem of adult illiteracy is from the educational perspective, thus the most obvious efforts have been educationally oriented. Aware that something should be done to lessen the problems experienced by adults with literacy problems and the costs they represent to society at large, learning opportunities have been created.

Provincial governments, through education and training ministries and institutions, have provided formal classroom programs. In some cases, the federal government has provided financial assistance to students in the guise of employment training (Anderson 1989). The federal and provincial governments also have provided financial support to institutions, agencies and organizations with responsibility for informal learning opportunities in the form of volunteer tutoring programs.

In the National Adult Literacy Database, over 3000 programs are listed, and the following statistics apply:

- 41% focus on basic literacy instructions.
- 26% deal with second language instruction.
- 38% deal with job search or life skills.
- 71% are offered in English.
- 63% are at or below the grade 8 level.

- 33% of the programs incorporate classroom instruction.
- 51% identify their primary target group as the general adult population.

Provincial funding supports 43% of the instructional programs identified in NALD. Federal funds account for 27%.

In terms of course organization, many programs rely on one-to-one tutoring, with tutoring sessions occurring in such settings as literacy program offices, libraries or learners' homes. Some programs emphasize one-on-one tutorials because of the advantages of learner confidentiality combined with the very focused teaching and support given in the tutoring situation. However, some literacy practitioners and policy-makers are skeptical about the effectiveness of volunteers as teachers, especially with students who have difficulties in learning.

Some programs provide learning centers, operating on a "drop-in" basis. Teaching is usually on an individual basis, sometimes employing competency-based, self-paced program packages, and sometimes building a curriculum from particular learner needs.

Many schools, community colleges and businesses offer classroom instruction. Some programs that rely primarily on one-to-one tutoring also use small groups for particular purposes, for example, for special writing projects. Small group work is favored in francophone programs throughout the country.

Program efforts to help students with the transition from basic literacy to more advanced work are becoming more common. These "bridging" programs give students the skills to deal with the more academic work and increased class size.

3.2 PROGRAM SUPPORT

A second type of initiative is related to program support, i.e. those activities and resources that enhance the teaching/learning initiatives. There are a number of means by which programs are supported, for example:

- professional development and networking provided by literacy organizations for practitioners;
- databases, resource collections and teaching materials provided and/or produced by institutions and agencies; and
- formal and informal research.

The following is a brief listing of some of the kinds of program support available in Canada.

3.2.1 Support From Professional Organizations

Each province and territory has a coalition or network association of literacy organizations whose goals are professional development, exchange of ideas, public awareness and lobbying.

- The Canadian Alliance for Literacy is a coalition of volunteer organizations that originated in 1988. It includes such organizations as the Movement for Canadian Literacy (MCL), Frontier College, Laubach Literacy, Canadian Association for Adult Education (CAAE), plus many others. It's goal is the promotion of literacy awareness on a national level.

- The Ontario Literacy Coalition is a coalition of all literacy programs in the province of Ontario, and the Newfoundland and Labrador Literacy Coalition is a network of literacy organizations in that province.

- Like the OLC, the Alberta Association for Adult Literacy is a network of volunteer literacy projects, community colleges and libraries who offer literacy programming in Alberta.

- The Saskatchewan Adult Basic Education Association is the network of literacy organizations in that province.

The provincial and national organizations have been assisted and supported by the National Literacy Secretariat through grants for innovative projects and conferences. These organizations typically produce a networking newsletter, circulate information about new resources, and offer formal and informal professional development opportunities for grassroots literacy practitioners. There is a concerted effort in most provinces to involve students in the leadership of the organizations.

3.2.2 Information And Teaching Resources

All provincial and national literacy organizations have databases of one sort or another; however, there are two national associations which stand out for their database accumulations.

First, the National Adult Literacy Database, housed at Fanshawe College and financed by the National Literacy Secretariat, has more than 5,000 data base entries which include activities,

services and resources from all over the country. These can be accessed for a charge via computer modem.

A second significant organization is the Centre for Literacy at Dawson College, Montreal. The Centre, too, has a collection of more than 5,000 documents for loan. Their focus is on the literacy practitioner and they have books, articles and research findings from across the country.

A brief discussion of some of the teaching/learning resources that are produced and available in Canada is found in Appendix C.

3.2.3 Research

For a variety of reasons, there is not a great deal of research in the field of adult literacy. A complete discussion of research in adult literacy is found in Appendix B. Universities and many other agencies engage in research, for example:

- Both ABC Canada and the Canadian Federation of Labour have conducted extensive surveys and studies of workplace literacy, for example;
- Frontier College has conducted research which targets children and family. The result of this research is in their book, *Manual for Family Literacy*.
- UNESCO, as well, has undertaken research into literacy in Germany, Belgium and Canada.

There is a growing recognition that research of many kinds, i.e. qualitative and quantitative, is the key to understanding and addressing the problem of adult illiteracy.

3.3 POLICY DEVELOPMENT

A third type of initiative in the field of adult literacy is development of policies to govern and direct activities in the field. The policy system surrounding adult literacy involves a number of developing formal and informal public policies, some related specifically to education and others to aspects periferally related to the problem of adult illiteracy.

Most provinces have developed or are in the process of developing adult literacy policies, partly because an internally recognized need and partly because of federal-provincial jurisdictional precedents regarding education (Anderson 1989; Thomas Taylor, and Gaskin 1989). Thus, in each province, at least one individual in a department of education, training,

and/or advanced education has direct responsibility for adult literacy. Through these individuals and others, policies have been created that reflect adult literacy as a foundational skill for adult and human resource development.

A federal policy governs ABE to a great extent; the National Training Act of 1982 gives responsibility for ABE to the provinces (Thomas, Taylor and Gaskin 1989). An entirely different federal public policy relegates literacy to the Department of Citizenship and Multiculturalism as a citizenship and community development issue. Within Employment and Immigration Canada and the Ministry of Industry, Science and Technology, adult literacy is related to human resource development and skills training through policies which direct funds for student and research support.

Provincially and federally, some peripheral public policies that have applicability are those which emphasize the need to be internationally competitive in terms of business and industry, which encourage training in and development of the service industries, which lessen resources for public and mental health and social services, and others. More significantly, policy which is related to each of the actual or potential special interest groups has peripheral applicability to adult literacy policy, i.e. government departments that have responsibility for aboriginal issues, welfare recipients, the disabled, immigration, women's issues, justice, national defence and others.

Formal and informal policies in the literacy movement also have a significant impact on the policy system. For example, there is currently an emphasis on literacy in the workplace, on aboriginal literacy, women's literacy and family literacy. Literacy organizations and sponsoring government agencies are promoting conferences, research and special projects in these fields and reinforcing the diversity of the adult literacy issue. Other issues, which are receiving considerable attention are the role of the learners in policy development, intergenerational aspects of literacy, research and networking, and literacy as a human right.

In summation, there are a wide variety of formal and informal policies that govern and direct adult literacy in Canada; however, there is no national umbrella policy to give legitimacy or consistency to the issue.

3.4 ADVOCACY AND PUBLIC EDUCATION

A fourth type of initiative is advocacy and public education undertaken both by literacy-specific organizations and by "friends of literacy" who conduct fundraising and public awareness campaigns on behalf of the field. Six very prominent advocates are:

1. CBC's Peter Gzowski, who hosts invitational golf tournaments to raise money for literacy across the country;

2. the Public Policy Forum, which has presented the literacy needs in a series of public meetings across Canada;

3. the ABC Foundation, which is organizing and informing big business in Canada around literacy issues;

4. Canada Post Corporation, which has undertaken a significant public relations campaign on behalf of adult literacy needs;

5. the United Way, which has developed a kit describing the literacy issues and which has been distributed to UW's across the country urging them to use some of the money raised for local literacy programs and projects; and

6. the Conference Board of Canada, which has undertaken and disseminated several studies of work-related literacy issues.

The literacy community is deeply appreciative of the efforts of these advocates as they add immeasurably to the initiatives of adult literacy organizations and agencies.

CHAPTER 4

ASSESSMENT OF INITIATIVES

4.1 IN GENERAL

As there is not a formal policy related to adult illiteracy in Canada, the activities directed at solving the problem to date constitute an informal policy. In the absence of formal policy, an assessment of the past informal policy reveals many significant achievements and a large number of unmet needs.

4.1.1 Among The Many Achievements Are:

1. a large and growing number of educational learning opportunities for adults desiring literacy development;

2. greater public awareness and political support for the issue;

3. greater awareness of the needs of individuals and organizations involved in the ABL/ ABE field;

4. more and more varied learning resources and learning opportunities for adult students;

5. a louder voice for the primary stakeholder in the issue, the adult learners themselves;

6. a professional network for co-ordinating informal professional development, advocacy, research and public awareness.

This list could be continued for some time, but it is probable that the list of unmet needs is longer.

4.1.2 Progress To Date

The efforts and achievements to date simply haven't been sufficient to overcome the problem, according to Chang (1988: 19).

Students do not have adequate access to the learning opportunities they need. For almost all programs, there are long waiting lists. In some cases, the environment is not adult-oriented, the progression is lock-step, and/or there are inadequate learning resources. There is a long way to go before the social and educational climate....accepts the realities of adult illiteracy. The support systems, i.e. financial assistance, counselling services, etc. are scanty at the very best.

Paid instructors and volunteer tutors have a similar list of complaints: inadequate resources, unsubstantial remuneration, limited credibility. Most have no job security, no benefits, and work under stressful conditions. In many cases, the physical environment is quite unacceptable, usually the last space the hosting agency has available.

Program organizers and administrators add that there is a continual struggle for financial resources, no hope of increased assistance, and little to offer staff in terms of improvements.

There is no one co-ordinating body at the government level to facilitate communication between departments, giving rise more to competition than to cooperation. In many cases, administrators have no vehicle to communicate with each other and are literally out there "reinventing the wheel".

4.1.3 Expression Of Public Concerns

That the problem of adult illiteracy is far from solved and that the public is not sufficiently aware of it is reflected in the barrage of newspaper reports under such titles as:

- "Education system blamed for illiteracy" (Panzeri 1990),
- "4 million adults 'at risk' of illiteracy" (Smith 1990),
- "Education is Canada's worst subject" (Raymond 1990),
- "Time to look again at the education of Canadians" (Lortie 1990), and
- "Illiteracy misunderstood by Canadians, Decima poll finds" (Motherwell 1990).

In conclusion, it would appear that the past efforts at addressing the problem have not been as successful as would be desired.

4.2 FOUR SPECIFIC TARGET AREAS

A major purpose of this report is to assess the initiatives and issues related to four specific groups: basic illiterates, immigrants, illiterates in the workforce and aboriginal groups. For each of these groups, some statistics have been cited to provide an idea of the magnitude of the problem. As well, in a very broad sense, initiatives which have been undertaken by industry, educational institutions and various levels of government are outlined.

4.2.1 Basic Illiteracy

As has been stated earlier, there are very few adult Canadians who are totally illiterate. Of those who are, many may never become functionally literate, either by choice or by lack of ability.

While elementary and secondary education are compulsory across Canada, at least until the age of 16, it is clear that all students do not develop literacy skills equally well. That this is so is evidenced by the move toward the development of standards which represent essential competencies required by today's students. It is recognized that some students leave the school system either totally or functionally illiterate for a variety of reasons. Problems or weaknesses in basic literacy instruction in the current school system contribute to the problem of adult illiteracy in Canada.

A second issue relating to adult illiteracy is that of the drop-out rate of Canadian high school students. The current statistic of a 30% drop-out rate across the country with higher rates within the eastern provinces has prompted all levels of government, industry and the electorate to examine what is being taught in the secondary schools across this nation as well as assess the degree to which the curriculum is relevant to real-life.

An issue which has a pronounced impact both upon the drop-out rate and the illiteracy rate is that of equity or equality of opportunity. Unfortunately, the inability to define what constitutes quality in programming at the schools has become secondary to the issue of equal distribution of resources. Present funding programs which tend to treat unequals equally may very well contribute to both the drop-out and illiteracy rates within this country.

4.2.2 Immigrants And Literacy

There are significant numbers of immigrants to Canada for whom literacy is a real problem, literacy in an official Canadian language and/or literacy in their mother tongue. Developers of literacy programs need to have a comprehensive appraisal system in place to determine the needs of the immigrants, particularly for language and work-skill training.

The Conference Board of Canada (1990) reported that for workers in Canada whose mother language was neither French nor English, very high rates of literacy deficits were noted. Across the country, some 27% of employers noted that they were experiencing problems with this type of employee, despite the relatively small number of immigrants in the work force. In Ontario, the Chateau Laurier Hotel in Ottawa instituted a basic literacy program for a large number of immigrants in its work force of 500. The program, offered in co-operation with the Ontario Federation of Labor and funded by the Ministry of Skills Development, was developed primarily because the immigrant staff members could not communicate effectively in either official language, although the immigrants were generally well-educated.

From the research on literacy for ESL speakers, the following points are significant:

- A higher percentage of foreign-born women - approximately 33 percent - are categorized as having very limited reading skills compared to foreign-born males or to Canadian-born men and women (Boyd 1991).

- Programs that combine language and literacy training, rather than merely an enhancement of literacy skills, appear useful for individuals who do not have English or French mother tongues (Boyd 1991).

- Utilizing a peer response group in ESL writing classes rather than a teacher-centred approach provides students with opportunities to be active and knowledgable participants in their own learning (Bell 1991).

- Promoting English-language literacy programs fails to consider those who speak other languages and dialects. Supporting mother tongue literacy fosters "the notion of literacy as empowerment" (Faulk 1991: 13).

In general, ESL programming and adult literacy programs often overlap, both because of similar needs and because of small numbers in some locations.

4.2.3 Literacy And Illiteracy In The Workplace

There is a growing interest in courses for workers and a growing number of programs. The workplace is increasingly seen as one ideal setting for literacy programs. The reasons for this include the fact that learners can have immediate benefit from the basic skills they acquire, and recruitment can be supported by powerful networks among workers.

The *1991 Inventory of Workplace Literacy Programs* developed by Wendy Johnson for ABC Canada lists 72 workplace programs in existence in 1991, some in nearly every province and territory in Canada. In general:

- few of the workplace programs listed utilize the services of volunteer tutors, although Frontier College has set workplace programs in Ontario in which trained volunteer staff members are tutors.

- the majority of workplace programs appear to be time-specific; fewer programs are ongoing.

- workplace programs generally adopt program goals related to specific tasks such as upgrading of reading and writing skills. Fewer programs have as part of their goals to increase worker confidence and self-esteem. One program in Ontario, Basic Education for Skills Training (BEST) states that the goal of the program is to "empower working people."

Quite a number of organizations are involved in various kinds of workplace literacy programs. Frontier College has set up Learning in the Workplace Programs within various businesses and corporations. In these joint ventures between employers and employees, employee volunteers tutor fellow employees. The Canadian Federation of Labour has taken a very active role in the promotion of its workplace literacy program, and is attempting to get literacy training into its member unions collective agreements.

The efforts at developing workplace literacy programs are in response to a recognized need. A survey conducted by the Conference Board of Canada in 1988-90 showed that 70% of employers have functionally illiterate employees as part of their workforce. On average, the illiteracy problem affects approximately 10.7% of their total workforce. In the same survey, it was reported by over 30% of the respondents that literacy deficits impeded general training and/or the acquisition of new and advanced skills.

However, while companies surveyed obviously recognized the severity of the problem and the impact of the problem upon competitiveness, only 24% had specific policies in place to deal with the problem of functional literacy in the workplace. It would seem that the primary response of the companies to deal with functional literacy is not to deal with the issue in a proactive sense. Rather, 36% of the respondents have instituted a pre-employment testing program to screen out those who are functionally illiterate and innumerate.

Of those companies which reported that personnel policies were in place to address the problems of functional illiteracy and innumeracy, the following percentages are illustrative of programs which they have instituted:

- 56% provide in-house basic skills training.
- 44% provide off-site basic skills training.
- 25% provide second language training.
- 20% have programs involving labor union participation and include some of the following features:
  - joint program development;
  - joint program promotion;
  - regular consultation and support;
  - shop floor assistance; and
  - time-sharing between employer and employee.

In terms of funding, of the workplace programs listed in the 1991 inventory, half were funded entirely by provincial or federal governments (or a combination of the two). Nearly 40% of the programs were funded through a partnership approach involving governments, the company, and the union. A small number of programs were funded entirely by the employer.

The following points are some other significant findings of the Conference Board study.

- The industrial sector with the most acute problems of functional illiteracy is the restaurant, accommodation and hospitality sector. The sector reporting the fewest problems was the financial sector.
- Minimum educational standards required for employment tend to rise as the size of the organization increases. Survey results show that between 41-75% of the respondents have set a high school education as the minimum acceptable educational attainment for hiring.
- Many of the respondents have indicated a level of discomfort in using the grade levels as a proxy for skills in literacy and numeracy. Indeed, respondents indicated frustration in the degree to which quality of applicants varied despite the fact that all held a Grade 12 education. In addition, many firms do not believe that Grade 12 is sufficient evidence of the ability to read, write and perform mathematical operations.

Functionally illiterate employees are found in all age groups, but the largest proportion are found within the 35-54 age group. Literacy, or the lack of it, is clearly linked to age--older Canadians are more likely to be illiterate than are younger ones. An explanation for the

relatively high rate of illiteracy in the 35-54 age group lies in the increasing skill levels required for employment and the higher recruitment standards which have been introduced in the last 10-15 years (see Statistics Canada 1989).

Breakdowns of the level of training provided by various industries in the Canadian economy are instructive: in most major industrial sectors, about one third of companies offer training; in construction, the proportion is less than one fourth; in food production, the proportion is approximately one sixth. Training programs offered by companies are begun, only to a small degree, by the institution of new technologies and their requisite skills.

Small firms (i.e. those which employ fewer than nine people) in Canada comprise over 80% of all companies in Canada and should, therefore, represent the majority of the trainers in the work force. However, such is not the case. According to the Economic Council of Canada (1992), "proportionately, their effort is inferior: only 27% of small firms conduct training, while 76% of large firms [i.e. those which employ more than 100 people] do so" (p. 23).

The most serious issues seems to be determining whether literacy programs in and for the workplace are an expense or an investment. According to Joanne Linzey, Executive Director of ABC Canada, business seems to view workplace literacy as an "add on", something which can easily be dropped when times get tough, and this attitude has got to change. Officials at Frontier College agree and say that when business suffers the first thing they drop is the workplace literacy program. Literacy advocates believe that businesses should see literacy training as an investment rather than an expense.

To some degree, the importance of basic skills in and for the workplace has been recognized. "Mastery of basic skills is fundamental to both academic and vocational success.....research indicates clearly that functional literacy "pays" in the sense that it improves one's chances of being employed in a better-paying industry and occupation, and of earning a higher income in those industries and occupations (ECC 1992: 4).

4.2.4 Literacy And Aboriginal Peoples

In comparison to the general Canadian population, where one out of four Canadians is functionally illiterate and where 30% of high school graduates are functionally illiterate (see Southam News survey: Broken Words, 1987), at least 45% of the on-reserve Indian population and at least 50% of the Inuit population are functionally illiterate (Aboriginal Literacy and Empowerment 1990, p. 8). For Inuit people, the situation is more serious than for the Indian population: in 1986, of the population over 15.97% did not possess a high school certificate and only 0.2% had attained a university degree.

The general situation must be understood to see that drastic and dramatic changes are necessary in order to make the aboriginal populations of this country full and equal partners in the education system, its benefits and the economic security an education can provide. In a report published by the Economic Council of Canada (1992), it was noted that "educational attainment among Canada's native peoples is weak, compared with that of other Canadians. Native Canadians have been caught in a vicious circle of limited education, unemployment or poorly paid jobs, and poverty. Redressing this situation is an urgent social priority" (p. 6).

In the same report, the Economic Council of Canada drew attention to the following statistical data:

- While the bulk of the Canadian population is between 25-64 years, the majority of the native Indian population is under 25 years.

- Aboriginal people will make up a growing proportion of the entrants to the labor force in the coming years. In Manitoba and Saskatchewan, for example, one in every four entrants to the work force during the 1990s will be Indian.

- Estimates by the Economic Council of Canada (1992) based on data from Indian and Northern Affairs show that, on average, 45% of the on-reserve and 24% of the off-reserve population have less than a grade 9 education. This compares with 17% of the non-Indian population.

- Progress has been made in narrowing the education gap between natives and non-natives during the past 30 years. For example, the proportion of on-reserve native students who remained continuously enrolled to the last grade in secondary school climbed from 3% in 1960 to 44% in 1988, but this is far short of the national average of 67% of students.

- Another positive sign of the change in aboriginal education levels is the fact that some 18,500 native students were enrolled in post-secondary institutions in 1990.

It has been noted that in recent years the trend toward shifting control of education to local band administration has had a positive impact upon reducing the drop-out rate. Notwithstanding this improvement, most native communities do not have their own high schools and in those communities the drop-out rates are in the range of 80-90%.

Deficiencies in the general education system in Canada are failing members of the aboriginal population as well as the general population. However, these deficiencies are compounded for the native population by factors such as the continuing impact of the residential school experience, language issues, the lack of community-based high schools, and the lack of a

culturally relevant curriculum. In a document entitled *Aboriginal Literacy and Empowerment* produced by the House Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs (1990), it was noted that "functional literacy is a culturally relative concept and literacy statistics based on grade level achievement are, at best, rough benchmarks" (p. 6). It was also noted that literacy statistics for Canada, which have been based on skills testing, have not included aboriginal populations. In relation to the aboriginal community, it was specifically stated that grade level achievement figures may seriously underestimate the status of illiteracy.

Aboriginals perceive that the dominant society has attempted in the past to suppress aboriginal cultures and languages and there is a continuing neglect of the special cultural and educational needs of indigenous minorities. This is clearly evident in a statement to the House Committee by a member of the Yellowhead Tribal Council:

> "We think it important to note that Native illiteracy at its inception is not the result of a cultural deficit. Rather, it is tied to the under-education or inadequate education of the native peoples of Canada.... Native illiteracy and its causes deny the Native people full and effective participation in society. Conversely, Native literacy can only be achieved through the full and effective participation of the Native people in the educational process and in the development of Native literacy programs (Aboriginal Literacy and Empowerment 1990)."

Overall, three significant issues related to the literacy of aboriginal peoples emerge:

- the need to control their own education;
- the need for aboriginal language instruction; and
- the need for greater control of their own literacy programs.

For example, Nahanee (1991) has indicated the need for parents and Elders to be involved in the process of motivating their children to develop literacy skills. Similarly, a study of literacy programs for aboriginal peoples suggests that future literacy programs must incorporate culturally relevant materials and approaches. Programs must be developed that are culturally sensitive and adaptable to a student's level of need. In short, a national strategy is needed to address the unique circumstances surrounding aboriginal literacy while accounting for the commonalities with all form of adult literacy education.

CHAPTER 5

ISSUES, CONCERNS AND UNMET NEEDS

The issues, concerns and unmet needs related to adult literacy in Canada may be loosely grouped into the following categories:

1. **policy-related, i.e.**

   - the need for co-ordination,
   - varying and conflicting definitions,
   - the relationship to other societal problems,
   - special needs groups,
   - public perceptions; and

2. **overarching concerns, eg.**

   - funding and resourcing,
   - lack of research,
   - student participation in decision making,
   - partnerships,
   - a call to action; and

3. **program-related, i.e.**

   - funding,
   - recruitment, retention, and completion rates,
   - teaching materials and methods, curriculum and testing,
   - paid and volunteer personnel,
   - use of technology, and
   - evaluation and accountability; and

4. **prevention-related, eg.**

   - attention to youth-at-risk,
   - the need for educational reform, and
   - support for a lifelong learning culture.

It is important to note that, in the discussion of issues and concerns, recommendations come forward; however, these recommendations are not necessarily optimal or consensual. Therefore, some recommendations are included in the knowledge that all statements of issues and concerns are logically the calls for solutions, options and/or recommended actions.

5.1 POLICY-RELATED ISSUES

5.1.1 The Need For Co-ordination Of Efforts

The first major issue is that there is no national policy governing adult literacy and, in fact, there are not consistent provincial policies. Therefore, initiatives directed at adult literacy in Canada have evolved in a random manner resulting in such problems as overlaps and gaps in service, inconsistent approaches and philosophical underpinnings, and many others. The need for co-ordination of activities and sharing of information at the program level in order to minimize duplication of effort and to eliminate gaps in service has been stated by the Council of Ministers of Education of Canada (1990) and others.

Because there are a wide number of agencies and organizations working in the field of adult literacy, there is a diversity of approach that is viewed as beneficial. However, that may be the only benefit of a largely unco-ordinated effort to address a problem of the magnitude of adult illiteracy. The array of government departments, individuals and groups, i.e. the institutional fragmentation, translates into political weakness according to Chisman (1989). Therefore, there is practically no lobby for literacy, no clearly stated national goal or plan, and no mechanism for developing one. There is no federal spokesperson for literacy - no place where the buck stops. It follows that some would argue for the development of a national policy that would address and alleviate many of the problems and issues that follow.

Harb (1991) voices the sentiments of many when he states that the federal government should establish a national strategy on literacy to include a policy, a national educational minimum standard and a national awareness program and campaign. He states:

> "We should set a goal to have at least half of those who need literacy training either in, or having completed, remedial programs for literacy by the year 2000" (p. 13).

The Economic Council of Canada, in the report *A Lot to Learn* (1992: 29), calls for a similar set of targets, for example:

- By the year 2000, all 16-year-old Canadians should be functionally literate and numerate, and

- Raise retention rates and enrolment rates of the disabled, women and aboriginals to the average of the general population.

Chisman (1989) echoes those sentiments when he says that there is a primary need for leadership: setting clear national goals and reorienting priorities to achieve them. He states that we must place a higher priority on the most seriously neglected national problem: basic skills of the current workforce.

A call for co-ordination of efforts is clearly heard from across Canada. Not only is a national policy needed, but a national co-ordinating body as well. Harb (1991) and many others have called for a national registry or repository to be set up to consolidate resources, grants and contact persons in relation to literacy programs, projects and other activities. In fact, the National Adult Literacy Database, housed at Fanshawe College and funded by the National Literacy Secretariat, is a comprehensive and laudable beginning to this process. As with all other aspects of adult literacy endeavors, funding is a problem with a project of this magnitude.

5.1.2 The Issue Of Definitions

The most fundamental concern in the development of policy is that of numerous and conflicting definitions for such terms as literacy, illiteracy and adult basic education. The term literacy, for example, has been defined in different ways throughout history, depending on sociopolitical context and usage (Draper 1989). Some definitions of literacy focus explicitly on the technical skills of reading and writing (United Nation 1978), while others see it as a vehicle for human empowerment, as in the following:

1. literacy...a way of seeking truth (Draper 1989, p. 79).

2. literacy...a political act having its roots in socio-economic realities (Hamadache 1990, p. 7).

The most current view of literacy is as a continuum of skills acquisition (Heathington 1987; Street 1990).

Similarly, the variety of definitions of illiteracy is numerous and divergent, for example:

1. Unesco's 1978 statement: A person is illiterate who cannot with understanding both read and write a short simple statement on his everyday life (Thomas 1989: 6); or

2. Illiteracy is a relative and dynamic condition, continually being transformed by expanding human information needs, new social arrangements and technical innovations (Levine 1990: 14).

Clearly, when there are a variety of accepted definitions for literacy, there can be problems. For example:

- a behavioristic conception leads to narrow approaches, according to De Castell, Luke and MacLennan (1986);
- some definitions lead to the use of inappropriate labels attached to individuals or groups, according to Jones (1991).

The conflicting definitions and perceptions of adult literacy are further discussed in Appendix D. In brief, the significance of this issue is that the source of policy formulation and implementation, the government level and department responsible, depends largely on the definition that is adopted. *To avoid adopting a definition is to avoid developing policy that can be implemented.*

5.1.3 Relationships With Other Social Problems

A third policy issue is the relationship between illiteracy and a host of other societal problems, for example, poverty, public health and safety, human rights violations, unemployment, crime and violence, political apathy.

The significance of this issue is that attempts to solve illiteracy as an isolated problem, an educational problem or an economic problem for example, may be doomed to failure. It may be satisfiing, in terms of policy formulation, to isolate illiteracy as one or two problem types; the current focus is on the economic repercussions of illiteracy (Darville 1988; Chisman 1989).

However, this approach ignores the integral relationship between the economic repercussions and the other far-ranging causes and consequences of illiteracy. Harb (1991) succinctly states that "the key to solving the problems of our education system lies in attacking Canada's social problems" (p. 6). Of the apparent emphasis on economic implications, the Economic Council of Canada (1992) states: "Economic concerns should never be allowed to crowd out human values. We would be a very poor nation indeed if we did not value literacy and the light it throws on individual lives as among the greatest of goods in and by themselves."

While the approach to addressing adult functional illiteracy is focussed in the educational realm, the issue is more than an educational problem, i.e. it is a social, economic and political issue as well (Fox & Baker 1990; Darkenwald & Valentine 1990). However, while adult functional illiteracy is deemed to cause enormous problems, financially, socially and psychologically for individuals and for society, the current solutions are typically educational ones.

5.1.4 Special Needs Groups

The variety of definitions and the relationship of illiteracy to a myriad of other societal problems is closely linked to the large number and variety of special needs or special interest groups inherent in the field of adult literacy. As awareness of the problems and interest in programs grows, it has become increasingly clear that a single approach or solution is impossible because of the differences between individuals and groups.

Special attention to programming is sought for women (Horsman 1989; Lind 1990), for families (Sticht and McDonald 1990), for learners whose first language is not one of Canada's two official languages (Street 1990), for individuals in penal institutions, for employment situations (Chang 1989), for aboriginal peoples, and for seniors. This makes imminent sense as two thirds of Canada's elderly (aged 55-69 years), some 2,000,000 people, experience some degree of difficulty with printed material (Ross 1991) and the needs, learning preferences and life circumstances differ greatly between seniors as a group and young families, for example.

The significance of this issue is that the responsibility for these different special populations lies with a variety of government levels and departments. To fragment policy development by addressing special populations may be to tailor policy recommendations and/or to create disparity between resources for different populations.

Adult literacy is connected to broader social movements (eg. including people who are women, workers, native, francophone, hearing-impaired, older, and others) and to social justice issues. However, participants at the Literacy 2000 conference (Vancouver, 1990) noted that social justice questions are important but they sound socialistic; also, literacy work is so broadly conceived it is hard to distinguish from social work.

5.1.5 Public Perceptions

Despite efforts at public awareness and public education, the Canadian public still holds misconceptions about adult illiteracy. Some common, erroneous conceptions are that:

- literacy and English as a Second Language are the same thing;
- adults who have difficulty with reading are stupid;
- the issue is not all that significant politically or economically;
- if some adults can't read, it's their own fault;
- if there are instructional programs, everybody will learn and will learn quickly; and
- the immigrant population is the only thing which accounts for the high illiteracy rate.

Harb (1991) speaks for many when he says:

> "We must examine and redefine our terminology and resultant attitude when we talk about people who have literacy problems. We must eradicate the stigma of illiteracy that prevents many people from seeking help (p. 11)."

According to Harb and others, the media and the Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommuications Commission should not only support initiatives to promote literacy awareness, but also take a leading role in devising a national advertising campaign aimed at fighting illiteracy. Because of the great influence on the public, the media should help fight the stigma attached to illiteracy and encourage communication between support groups and individuals with literacy problems. Until the voting public understands the magnitude of the problem and the complexity of the solutions, policy and provision will be hampered.

The most common misconception seems to be that adult illiteracy is a temporary phenomenon. This has resulted in no long-term policies or procedures to address the problem or to provide adequate resources. It has also resulted in a spate of opportunists who hint at instant cures and rapid change. As Shohet (1992) and others have stated, quick-fix marketers are a serious threat to the literacy endeavor.

The general public still denies there is a problem, according to many interviewed for this report. Joanne Linzey of ABC Canada says, "there is still a strong sense of 'this doesn't apply to me'." A national effort must be made to change this misconception and to address all of the policy-related issues presented here.

5.2 OVERARCHING PROBLEMS AND UNMET NEEDS

5.2.1 Funding Issues

Consistently, stakeholders in the field of adult literacy point to inadequate and inappropriate funding for all forms of initiatives directed at adult illiteracy. The severely limited amount of funding coupled with the ad hoc nature of most funding has caused serious problems for the field, for example:

- insufficient numbers of programs relative to the need;
- high turnover in personnel;
- inadequate quality of programs;
- minimal attention paid by business and industry;
- disinterest and misconceptions in the public; and
- inadequate lobby for literacy nationally.

The informal policy decision which has resulted in the short-term, ad hoc nature of programming efforts appears to be based on the assumption that the problem of adult illiteracy can be dealt with and then it will cease to exist. The CMEC (1990) has noted that the small number of individuals who take part in programs relative to the actual need is a result of the historical lack of ongoing program funding which has limited the number of available spaces and has meant that programs sometimes disappear by the time that learners decide to enter them.

It has been learned that underfunded or sporadically funded programs only raise expectations, later to crush them, and that stable funding is required to allow the gradual consolidation and expansion of successful programs (p. 20).

Further to that, there seems to be an assumption that the problem will go away with a burst of energy and attention; hence, the ad hoc nature of programming. There is also a reluctance to accept real responsibility for the problem by the educational and political systems; hence, the use of volunteers rather than trained professionals and, hence, the abysmal working conditions.

In addition to the problems of short-term funding, relative to the known need for remedial instruction, the insufficient amount of funding has not permitted an adequate number of programs.

In conversations with provincial and national organizations, uneven and reduced funding seemed to be the major problem across the board. There were very few organizations who didn't mention funding as problematic. X Morrison of the Canadian Association of Adult Education (CAAE) says, "the government is giving lip service to literacy but is not taking

the initiative." He deplores the idea that literacy can be "cured" by volunteers without drain on the public purse. Linda Shohet of the Centre for Literacy at Dawson College says, "the biggest problem is sustained funding. There is too much short-term funding for pilot projects, but we need long-term funding for programs." Grace Malicke of the U of A agrees, "the biggest problem is that all the money is going into projects and not into programs. That's a huge waste of money. Some kind of funding for long-term programs is needed." Elisse Zack of the OLC speaks about a "funding grab," when too many organizations are after the same scarce funds.

In summation, a major unmet need in adult literacy work is the provision of long-term, secure funding that is equally accessible by all.

5.2.2 Lack of Research

Research is needed to substantiate the claims of program need and program success that are being made; to develop more and better materials and methodologies; and to further legitimize and professionalize the field with credibility.

- Chisman (1989) states that there is too little systematic understanding of what makes the difference and that there has been far too little effort to collect, systematize, evaluate and disseminate the knowledge we have.

- Burnaby (1992) has lamented the shortage of research, particularly Canadian research to which Wagner (1989) has added the need for research in French.

- Taylor, Shohet, and MacLeod (1992), state that if the business community needs to be convinced that workplace literacy is an investment in survival, research is needed to provide the specific types of concise and factual information required.

- Darville (in press) notes that there should be more university involvement in training literacy practitioners, measuring literacy levels, research on approaches to literacy teaching, and analysing policy.

Chisman (1989) summarizes succinctly when he states that there is a need to build a stronger intellectual base for adult literacy and that we must improve our understanding of the nature of the problem and the types of measures that will address it most effectively.

Not everyone, however, agrees that more research is needed. Burnaby (1992) believes that we should make more use of that research which has been conducted.

Canadians now know more about adult literacy skills that can be tested in mass studies than almost any country in the world. It now behooves us to work out what all those data mean in terms of the literacy demands that Canadian society and institutions actually make on citizens (p. 166).

She goes on to say that:

- the data should also assist in determining the real needs for literacy as perceived by individuals, especially the poor and/or other special needs groups;

- Canadian researchers need to address the vast literature on child literacy learning to see the extent to which its findings are relevant to adult literacy learning; and

- those with primarily economic interests and those with main interests in social issues must at least attempt to co-operate in their research in order to come to grips with the real causes of, and means for, addressing adult illiteracy.

The need for more research has been recognized by the National Literacy Secretariat, and more financial resources are currently being directed at the areas targeted by their in-house study.

5.2.3 The Need For Student Involvement

To some educators and policy makers, it only seems to be common sense that students would be involved in decision making about programs and policies; to others, this is a foreign concept.

On the one hand, from the fields of adult education, educational evaluation, accountability and competitiveness comes the concept of client or consumer satisfaction. From this perspective, adult literacy students as clients must be involved in all decision-making processes.

On the other hand, tradition in education and training has left authority solely in the hands of educators. According to Hautecoeur (1989), among the traditional power brokers, there is an inability to perceive the points of view of those considered to be illiterate.

The Learners Action Commmittee of Canada, however, has argued effectively that students have a significant contribution to make and a right to be involved in the decisions made about and for them. This is reinforced by the results of an analysis of literacy programs in

industrialized countries which indicated that learners must become more involved in shaping policies, programming and the administration of literacy programs as well as becoming active participants in literacy research (Barton & Hamilton 1990).

5.2.4 Partnerships

As a program-related issue, partnerships may be one of the least problematic. Short of being innovative and therefore challenging, relative to traditional educational endeavors, the practice of developing partnerships has been very rewarding for most program providers.

Do partnerships exist between literacy groups? Are they well established or foundering? Most agreed that they could not exist without the partnerships they have forged with other literacy organizations. ABC Canada and the Canadian Federation of Labour has forged strong partnerships with business, and most coalitions or networks are partnered with literacy organizations with like interests or goals.

From the literature, the following comments have relevance to the establishment and utilization of effective partnerships:

- Improving overall literacy will require labour and management in firms and industries being actively involved in literacy programs (O'Neill & Sharpe 1991; Taylor, Lewe, & Draper 1991).

- Networks of communication between different countries and across languages may provide a deeper understanding of the literacy issue and provide effective alternatives to present literacy programs (Barton & Hamilton 1990).

- Barton and Hamilton (1990) recommended a greater collaboration between learners and the policy makers, programmers, administrators and researchers of literacy programs.

- The OECD (1992) report of the literacy movement in industrialized countries suggests a need for greater connections between literacy programs and community organizations and the workplace.

- Challis (1991) observed that literacy programs offered in the community provide students with various forms of support including financial, vocational, personal and cultural. He argued for improved mechanisms whereby students are more able to transfer between institution-based and community-based programs.

- There appears to be a need in Canada for greater co-ordination of literacy programs offered by government departments, post-secondary institutions, community organizations, business and labour (Challis 1991).

- Businesses should establish more co-operative and liaison programs with schools (Harb, 1991).

- Businesses should also help promote literacy awareness by sponsoring media-based educational campaigns. They should work with unions to identify workers who need help and provide programs based on the needs of workers and the needs of the workplace (Harb 1991).

- Major service clubs could be enlisted to raise public awareness and promote destigmatization of the illiteracy issue (Harb 1991).

- Business alone will not solve the problem - although business, labour and the public sector working together in partnership can accomplish a great deal (Chisman 1989).

It may be concluded that a variety of partnerships are possible and needed; however, there seem to be few incentives for institutions to work together and practically no mechanisms by which they might do so.

5.2.5 A Stalemate To Overcome

Finally, in terms of general issues, there appears to be a stalemate in activity. Partially because International Literacy Year exhausted the literacy community and utilized a disproportionate amount of resources, activity seems to be in decline. Many have argued the need for visible and invigorating expansion, development, and forward movement.

A different perspective is put forward by the CMEC (1990) who suggest that the current period:

> "May also be seen as a phase of experimentation, in which situations and modes of organizing literacy practice multiplied...the current phase may thus provide a deeper understanding of what mix of programs will be effective in attracting students, in teaching, and in visibly meeting societal goals for literacy. It may thus define the forms of literacy work that could take hold on a larger scale." (p. 22).

From either perspective, the time is ripe for new initiatives. In order for this to happen, according to Chisman (1989), we must recognize the political potential of adult literacy. As

a public policy issue, the basic skills problem is weak only because no one has taken the trouble to mobilize the three enormous political forces: business leadership, the public-policy community and the popular constituency for literacy.

According to Chisman (1989) and many others, there is a sense of urgency: 1990 is already history and "an opportunity such as this may not come again" (p. 36). He suggests two innovative ideas that would rejuvenate flagging interest in the field.

1. The establishment of a national centre for excellence to do research, technical assistance and training, and policy analysis. Its first priority would be to develop and assist in the adoption of nationally organized performance standards to measure the basic skills levels and progress of learners and to evaluate the effectiveness of programs (Chisman 1989: 25).

2. On an experimental basis, a $10 million literacy leader training fund should be established with the purpose of increasing the number of highly qualified full-time professionals in the adult basic skills field and to develop a larger cadre of change agents: individuals with a combination of educational, managerial, and organizational ability who can take the leadership in the establishment and management of basic skills programs, in the training of instructors and in the development and implementation of public policy in the field (Chisman 1989: 27).

In summation, although there appears to be a great deal of activity in adult literacy, as testified by the 5000 plus entries in the National Adult Literacy Database, there is a feeling of despondency in the literacy community. There is a fear that the initiatives created and supported by the National Literacy Secretariat will wither and die as the end of the five-year mandate approaches. Individuals are leaving the field for more secure pastures and programs are shutting down. An infusion of confidence and energy is needed.

5.3 PROGRAM-RELATED ISSUES AND CONCERNS

Although it seems mean-spirited to complain about the best efforts of literacy workers working under difficult circumstances, there are clearly articulated problems with ABE programming. American literacy authorities Fox and Baker (1990) have stated:

> "We do know that the track record of existing literacy programs is not strong. In many instances, outcome data are unavailable; when they do exist they show that the vast majority of educationally disadvantaged adults are not being reached by programs and that the people in the programs do not stay (p. 83)."

Similarly, Diekhoff (1988) has noted that the haphazard state of program evaluation has led to a "misinterpretation that 'everything is fine' in adult literacy" (p. 629).

The problems with ABE programming fall into six categories, loosely grouped around:

- student recruitment, retention and achievement;
- student mobility, transferability and certification;
- personnel, training and working conditions;
- learning materials and teaching approaches;
- the use of technology; and
- evaluation and accountability.

Unfortunately, there is very little in the literature of ABE that is actual research; however, the experiences and opinions of practitioners and advocates add to the volume and volume of criticism.

Adult literacy and basic education programs are in need of support and improvement. The CMEC (1990) summarizes the situation in this statement:

> "A need for program support infrastructure has been recognized - encompassing needs assessment, the development of curriculum outlines and learning materials, training for literacy practitioners, organizational development of practitioner networks, program evaluation and research" (p. 20).

5.3.1 Student Recruitment, Retention And Achievement

It is clear from both formal research and common practice that there is a problem with student recruitment, retention and achievement. A document from the American Division of Adult Education and Literacy (1989, cited in Fox & Baker 1990) states that:

- a very small percentage of the educationally disadvantaged are actually in programs,
- more than 50 percent of those drop out in six months to a year,
- there is little data to back up claims of positive outcomes from the existing programs, and
- there is very little data at all about programs and what does exist is not encouraging.

Fox and Baker (1990) are very critical of American ABE initiatives.

"Study after study, year after year, the United States has been told that its approach to adult education in general, and adult literacy in particular, has been a failure -- or at minimum, that there is little proof of success.....When data are available, in program after program the same results are evident: a high dropout rate, a low progress rate and a lot of disappointed people" (p. 89).

In Canada, there are no studies of student retention or achievement; however a comparison of statistics, projected-need to actual registrations, reveals a similar situation. According to Calamai (1987), approximately only 10 percent of those in need actually participate in programs.

The CMEC (1990), who has noted that students appear to attend sporadically and that drop-out rates are high in adult literacy programs, have developed the following list of obstacles to greater participation:

- inadequacy of programs in comparison to need;
- insufficient numbers and quality of literacy personnel;
- insufficient teaching materials;
- potential students' lack of time or motivation;
- costs of study for students, i.e. foregone wages or risk of losing unemployment insurance benefits;
- the large number of people with limited literacy skills who simply do not classify themselves as "illiterate" or "in need"; and
- the significant number who feel a distance between themselves and institutions and processes of schooling and perceive little value in committing time and effort to study.

To this, they add special obstacles for women:

- inadequate availability of child care,
- lack of transportation,
- the burden of doing two jobs a day, and
- lack of possible jobs paying more than minimum wage upon completion of study.

Major program-related issues, then, are the barriers to participation and the lack of incentives for many who could enter and remain in the programs.

5.3.2 Student Mobility, Transferability And Certification

Related to these problems of recruitment and retention are problems of mobility, transferability and certification. With regard to the concept of forward or upward mobility to more advanced programming, the CMEC has recognized the problem for students moving from basic literacy to more advanced work: "as class sizes increase, there is a loss of the close social support often provided by literacy programs and there is a shift to a more academic format of subject matter and instruction" (p. 33). They have recommended more bridging efforts to ease this transition.

Similarly, there is a problem for students transferring from one program, institution or province to another. Because there are no standards, provincially or nationally, students have great difficulty in making program transfers.

Finally, few programs provide meaningful certification for completers. In fact, because there are no uniform standards, placement or assessment procedures, their concept of meaningful certification is almost a moot point. Despite this, some students "need" a completion certificate to justify the use of time and resources; to others, it is incentive to complete a program and an important addition to their resumes.

5.3.3 Personnel And Working Conditions

This topic may be subdivided into several categories:

- the use of volunteers,
- volunteer training and management,
- certification and training for paid staff, and
- working conditions and career paths.

All these issues have implications for the quality of instructional initiatives.

Grassroots literacy workers have long been concerned about the role of volunteers: controversy surrounds the reliance on volunteers in some programs, the appropriateness of using untrained or minimally trained instructors, the nature of the learning that takes place in volunteer programs, and other related topics (Hautecoeur 1989; Ilsley 1985; Moore and Westell 1989). As Chisman (1989) states, volunteers alone cannot solve the problem, nor are they an inexpensive solution, but they are one of several essential ingredients in the literacy system and they need support.

With regard to paid staff, another concern is the status and professionalism of individuals working in the field, for example, the questionable formal training, qualifications and

background of some practitioners; the working conditions and employment circumstances in relation to other educators; and the lack of formal accreditation opportunities (Foster 1990). It is virtually impossible to obtain an undergraduate degree in adult basic education in Canada and those who work in the field are seldom treated or paid the same as other professional teachers or faculty members. Chisman (1989) notes that literacy workers are "often isolated and neglected" (p. 8).

According to John MacDonald of the MCL, the increased awareness of the literacy issue during International Literacy Year (1990) put an "added strain on literacy programs." The money was there, but instructors and tutors to train this waiting group of learners was lacking. Joanne Linzey of ABC Canada says there is a dearth of good instructors in literacy training, especially those that have training in workplace literacy; and Frontier College just can't get enough volunteers. A number of provincial coalitions spoke of long student waiting lists among its member literacy programs. UNESCO spokesperson Mariette Hoag added, "our member organizations would like more programs and program delivery, especially in remote areas."

Sticht (1991) says that the history of adult literacy education reveals a "crisis mentality" toward the basic skills education of adults that has "hindered the development of a cadre of professionals trained in adult basic education and a body of research-based knowledge about the development of basic skills in adulthood" (p. 84) For teachers and administrators in adult literacy and basic education, both the background preparation and primary career paths are outside the field. This leads to a high staff turnover and to the inability to develop the field as a profession. Chisman (1989) suggests that the creation of a literacy leader training program might encourage more young people to make adult literacy a full-time career.

On the other hand, participants at the Literacy 2000 Conference in Vancouver, 1991 raised the question of how training for practitioners could strengthen literacy work but not bureaucratize it by, for example, requiring a university degree for practitioners.

Chisman (1989) reminds us, however, that the quality of adult basic skills instruction will depend in large part on the quality of the teaching force in this field and on whether technology can be effectively applied to reinforce the efforts of teachers and learners alike (Chisman 1989: 26).

5.3.4 Teaching Materials And Approaches

Another category of problems with ABE programming centres on teaching materials and approaches. The CMEC has noted a lack of good Canadian-content adult-oriented materials, particularly in French. They also state that adult-centered computer software is in short supply. Condemnation of the inappropriateness of materials and approaches is voiced by such experts as Fox and Baker (1990).

Most certainly another reason why learning is slow and why many adult learners give up before they get very far is that they are bored, alienated or both by the learning materials they must work with. Adults, even low-level students struggling to sound out and recognize words, want to read materials that interest them. They want material with conflict, material that stresses emotions, material that allows them to reflect on their own lives or to escape into other people's. This is not found in books designed to teach sound-symbol correspondence or books designed for children (p. 90).

Davis (1991) adds a further perspective when she says:

> "Educational curricula reflect what is accepted as knowledge, culture, or linguistic practice by the dominant social group and thus serve to reproduce the values of that group. Bourdieu (1981) theorizes a mismatch between the values of the educational institution and those of specific learners is common (p. 34)."

The following are examples of recommendations from the research in the field that would improve adult literacy and basic education programs.

- Hirsch (1991) suggested that basic skills teaching needs to be provided to a much wider range of adults and set in the context of people's daily lives in the community and at work, rather than in a classroom at school.

- Ross (1991) indicated that a need exists for the creation of a support system in Canadian communities to sustain seniors who are not literate.

- Literacy programs must meet diverse and complex literacy needs. Therefore, programs should be sensitive to user characteristics (Boyd 1991). Such diverse literacy programs are essential, Jones (1991) insisted, as "learners have different needs at different stages in their literacy careers" (p. 99). Echoing these comments, Cummins (1991) indicated that these programs must respond to the "sociocultural and sociopolitical situation of learners (p. 19).

- Collins and Hanson (1991) indicated that literacy materials must be sensitive to the cultural and situational aspects of the students and they warn against

prepackaged literacy curriculum materials. Utilizing such materials takes out of context the day-to-day problems that illiterates face as they tend to reflect the dominant culture - a white, middle-class, urban orientation.

5.3.5 Use Of Technology

There is considerable controversy about the use of technology, especially computers, in adult literacy and basic education programs. Some positive opinions are that:

- Technology is not a substitute for teachers - it is an essential ingredient in any adequate nationwide literacy effort (Chisman 1989: iv).

- Rural literacy programs, in particular, could be enhanced by the utilization of mass media (Bell 1991).

- James Mellan (1991) of the Columbia Institute of Canada, Calgary has suggested the use of a computer assisted learning system (CAL) referred to as the Computer Curriculum Corporation Learning System (CCC). Individualized instruction in five major curriculum areas - mathematics, science, computer science, language arts and reading are available. Such systems, Mellan argued, empower the learner and the learning system is adaptable to individual learner needs.

The negative opinions are voiced largely by those who simply can't afford the luxury of computerized instruction in their programs. There seems little question that IBM's PAL system, YES Canada's Pathways system, and others are helping considerable numbers of individuals to develop enhanced literacy skills. The primary issue seems to be, therefore, cost and availability and the resulting inequities of access to computers and technology.

5.3.6 Evaluation And Accountability

Although adult literacy and basic education programs have been offered across Canada under a variety of auspices for many years, there is a lack of evidence of program evaluation or accountability (CMEC 1990).

A cursory review of the literature in the field of adult literacy and basic education reveals a limited amount on the subject of program evaluation. This may be because the need for advocacy, public awareness, curriculum development, staffing, recruiting and networking in basic skills education have been more pressing. The current calls for research and

accountability have resulted in increasing mention of program evaluation and some general themes emerge.

Most commonly found in the literature surrounding ABE programming are compelling arguments for evaluation. In a UNESCO document, Brand (1987) stated that program evaluation is fundamental to solving the adult illiteracy problem.

The persistence of functional illiteracy in industrialized countries provides a perfect example of the unfortunate effects that can be produced in societies which have not set up sufficiently accurate mechanisms for monitoring the results of their efforts.

Chisman, author of *Jump Start: The Federal Role in Adult Literacy* (1989), concurred with Brand. He said that in order to address adult illiteracy the U.S. government must, among other things:

- establish clear national goals and mechanisms to track progress toward those goals;
- foster more effective and better-co-ordinated systems of service delivery and policy;
- demand systems that produce large gains in basic skills and hold programs accountable for achieving those gains.

In fact, as Fox (1990) pointed out, very recent U.S. federal legislation establishes a system of accountability that directly links reading assessment results to a series of steps for changing school reading programs.

The immense U.S. debt makes it imperative that federal dollars are spent wisely and result in a more literate citizenry. Economic pressures will also act as a catalyst for strengthening accountability (p. 338).

Sticht and Mikulecky (1984), prominent researchers and leaders in the field of basic skills education, stated in an ERIC publication:

> "If there is one point at which most program developers fall short, it is in determining the value of the program. Very few basic skills, or, for that matter, technical skills training programs gather adequate quantitative or qualitative information to determine whether or not the program is cost-beneficial; that is, whether the benefits of the program outweigh the costs of developing and conducting the program. While this is admittedly difficult to do, program developers should attempt to do the best evaluation they can. At a minimum, a program that purports to develop certain cognitive skills

in trainees should demonstrate the extent to which such skills are, indeed, acquired (p. 36)."

The Business Council for Effective Literacy linked program evaluation and student assessment, noting that the outcomes of both have great significance for the way programs are developed, what is taught, the teaching/learning climate, legislation, funding policies of public and private agencies, government training programs, student eligibility, job access and more *(BCEL Newsletter*, Jan. 1990).

In literally hundreds of local general and workplace programs around the country, assessment is being carried on quietly and out of the public eye, much of it growing informally out of day-to-day practice. No one knows what the accumulated experience adds up to and how it can be used to guide the field. We need mechanisms for collecting and distilling this information (p. 8).

In a speech regarding the Basic Education and Skills Training (BEST) Program in Ontario, Turk (1989) warned against "unrealistic claims and promises."

"We feel it is important to be more realistic about the gains from increased literacy because overstated expectations will lead, over time, to a withering of broad commitment to resolving literacy problems (p. 5)"

According to Boraks (1988), there are few educational contexts as difficult to evaluate as the adult learning context where students and teachers drop out in great numbers; where instruction takes place in a variety of locations; where past learning experiences of adults vary greatly; and where there are few reliable and valid measures of adult beginning skill levels. To this, the Council of Ministers of Education in Canada (1990) add that there is no uniform system of reporting adult literacy enrolment statistics; few standardized enrolment systems; deliberate resistance to classifying participants according to grade or skill level.

Padak and Padak (1991) note that "evaluation appears to be a particularly problematic aspect of adult literacy programs and services" (p. 374). Certain evaluation difficulties may be a function of the design of adult basic education programs, eg. open-entry, open-exit. Regardless of the difficulties, they state that:

"Program evaluation data should strike a balance between quantitative measures and qualitative assessments of program impact. Numbers alone, whether counts or demographics about adults served or results of tests, cannot reveal the depth and breadth of program effectiveness. Moreover, since the learning that takes place is intended to have practical applications for adult learners, some effort to evaluate this external impact is also warranted (p. 379)."

From the literature, then, it becomes clear that program evaluation has not received adequate attention; it is necessary but most often missing. Program evaluation is essential to the process of making decisions for funding, marketing, substantiating, improving and continuing literacy programs.

The claim has been made that the current efforts to solve the problem of adult illiteracy are not working: the number of adults experiencing literacy problems is increasing, as is the level of literacy skill required (Calamai 1987; Hautecoeur 1989; Panzeri 1990). This claim is based on the assumptions that all functionally illiterate adults want to and/or are available to participate in learning opportunities, and that efforts to improve adult literacy cannot be isolated to the present adults, but should involve both the parents and the education of the upcoming generation.

To many, then, the solution is to demand systems that help learners attain large gains in basic skills: programs that help people to make major advances at work and in other aspects of their lives, rather than simply nominal achievements (Chisman 1989: v).
Chisman (1989) points out that expectations about what basic skills programs must achieve should change in at least two important ways:

1. rather than measure accomplishments by inputs (dollars spent, numbers served, numbers of programs), we must develop a system that is held accountable for how much the people who use it learn and whether they learn enough; and

2. as there are no clear expectations about large learning gains, we must be clearer and more realistic about what must be learned and we must demand large gains.

5.4 ISSUES RELATED TO PREVENTION

5.4.1 Youth-At-Risk

The analysis by Jones (1991) of the data from the **LSUDA** survey indicates that the literacy - schooling connection is an important one; staying in school enhances the likelihood that one will have high literacy skills. Therefore, appropriate programs should be developed to identify youth who are at risk of illiteracy. Non-government organizations should help to identify individuals in the community who need literacy training and refer them to existing community-based programs (Harb 1991).

Early intervention in schools to assist students with low reading ability appears to be useful. Findings from programs such as PAL (Pollard 1991) indicated that volunteer tutors working one-to-one with such students can assist in the development of self-worth and self-esteem.

This, Pollard submitted, "has provided the basis for change in their academic performance" (p. 14).

According to the Economic Council of Canada (1992), if the current decline in the functional literacy skills of youth continues, "our school system will produce well over one million new functional illiterates over the next 10 years. This a most alarming prospect, and our first priority must be to prevent it" (p. 13).

5.4.2 Educational Reform

From countless perspectives, there is a demand for massive educational reform, not just in Canada, but throughout the industrialized world. One the one hand, there is concern that students do not need to learn all that which is taught in the current system, i.e. regimentation to the factory model of production (Toffler 1990; et al.). On the other hand, there is concern that students are not being taught that which they will need to take part in the emerging world of work and global culture (Drucker 1989; Jean 1989; et al).

According to Harb (1991) and others, the federal government's role should be one of leadership as it steps up its emphasis on education through public policy avenues.

Recognizing that much of education takes place outside of schools, the government should encourage more integration of services that would contribute to a national approach. Although Canada has created a dependence on teachers, there is an active role for parents and communities to play. Because schools haven't responded to some special needs such as learning disabilities, we have to look beyond schools into the community where these overlooked people often turn for help (p. 8).

Some would go so far as to recommend that the Federal Government should consider establishing both a mobile education system that transcends provincial boundaries, a federal Ministry of Education to oversee federal involvement in education, and national standards of achievement for certification purposes (Harb 1991). Harb states that the provinces should carry out a complete revision of their school systems, their education objectives and their curricula to arrest the literacy problem and to prevent its perpetuation (p. 13). On the other hand, Chisman cautions that there is no single ideal service delivery system for literacy - the national effort is and must be pluralistic (Chisman 1989: iv).

In the consideration of educational reform and the pressures which have led to the adult illiteracy problem in Canada, it seems logical to make changes as outlined by King and Schneider (1991) in the Club of Rome report, i.e. to:

- recognize that the most important task is learning how to learn;

- deal with the plethora of knowledge;
- prevent the anachronism of new knowledge and "old" teachers, teaching what and how they were trained years ago;
- correct the impresssion of unsuitability that young people have about the traditional education they receive;
- stimulate learning change as an objective of education;
- give status and rewards to the teaching profession and improve teacher education;
- foster lifelong learning; and
- develop a multidisciplinary approach to education because each global problem has technical, economic, social, political and human elements.

That reform is necessary is reinforced by the literature in the field of adult literacy, for example:

- Morrison (1991) indicated that pressure must be placed upon the compulsory education delivery systems so that students will learn basic symbolic communication skills.
- Indications from the *LSUDA* survey, Jones (1991) argued, are that schools do not prepare students for everyday reading requirements and, thus, must provide a broader reading experience.

5.4.3 Lifelong Learning Culture

In order for Canadians to be actively and continuously involved in training and retraining, a lifelong learning culture must be cultivated. According to the Economic Council of Canada and many others, learning is and must be continuous. The ECC notes that:

- perhaps the most underrated form of continuous learning is informal self-instruction by individual persons, and
- the better-educated persons are more likely to take advantage of "recurrent" education later in life, after the completion of formal youth education. Recurrent education therefore tends to build upon early achievement.

A lifelong learning culture, then, logically builds on the characteristics of learning in a social context listed by Thomas lists (1991):

- learning is action.
- learning is individual.
- learning is influenced by other people.
- learning is a response to stimuli.
- learning is lifelong.
- learning is irreversible.
- learning takes time.
- learning cannot be coerced.

Similarly, from the study of adult education (Knowles 1971; Brookfield 1986; et al), a lifelong learning effort should:

- incorporate the principles of adult learning.
- account for individual motivations for student participation.
- provide for the diversity of learning styles.
- build on the prior learning experiences of the students.
- accommodate adult learning needs.
- ensure additional student support services.
- focus on enabling rather than on screening students.

Finally, the following principles of literacy education (Anthony R. et al. 1991) also have applicability:

- literacy emerges, i.e. competence develops as an ongoing refinement process.
- literacy learning is an active, constructive process.
- every learner is unique, having an individual prior knowledge and current need regarding language, learning and literacy.
- literacy empowers.

5.5 RESPONSE FROM THE LITERACY COMMUNITY

In summation, when members of the literacy community in Canada were informally surveyed (please see Appendix E), this is what they had to say with regard to issues, concerns and unmet needs:

1. **The issues that were considered by the majority of respondents to be the most significant, in order of importance, were:**

   - **ad hoc funding and impermanence**
   - **insufficient financial resources**
   - **myriad of related social problems**

2. The following issues were felt to be **most significant** by respondents:

   - public perception of "illiterates"
   - promises of "quick fixers"
   - inadequate number of programs
   - ad hoc funding and impermanence
   - insufficient financial resources
   - shortage of Canadian materials
   - over-reliance on volunteers
   - transferability for students
   - myriad of related social problems
   - no national policy/goals
   - "turf wars" for control
   - insufficient interest by business
   - insufficient number of personnel
   - inadequate training for personnel

3. The following issues were **not** felt to be very significant by respondents:

   - no standard curriculum
   - under-utilization of computers
   - certification of personnel
   - confusion with ESL
   - shortage of Canadian research
   - shortage of research in French
   - relative "newness" of the field

As well, the literacy community informally recommended action and initiatives that would address the issues and unmet needs.

1. **The recommendations that the majority of respondents thought were most important, in descending order, were:**

   - **invest more in literacy education**
   - **recognize literacy as a human right**
   - **retain diversity of approach**
   - **set national goals/policy**

2. The following topics were recommendations considered by the respondents to be of significance:

   - retain diversity of approach
   - set national goals/policy
   - involve students in planning
   - national awareness campaign
   - recognize literacy as a human right
   - eliminate use of word "illiterate"
   - liaise with teachers of children
   - develop literacy leader training
   - emphasize training of the employed
   - emphasize training for the unemployed
   - enforce the use of clear language in government and legal documents
   - invest more in literacy education

3. The following topics were recommendations considered by the respondents to be of lesser significance:

   - more research at universities
   - systematize assessment
   - systematize teaching approach
   - leave literacy to the provinces
   - systematize program evaluation
   - establish national co-ordination
   - demand gains in student achievement
   - create a national excellence centre

5.6 ADDRESSING THE ISSUES, CONCERNS AND UNMET NEEDS

In order to address the adult literacy issues and enhance the effort to increase the basic academic and life skills of adult Canadians, there are a number of general recommendations that have substantial backing from the literature and the research in the field. Four examples follow.

From the perspective of the improvement of adult literacy work in Canada, the following were recommended, among other things, in the IBE conference recommendations:

> "Unesco should facilitate the exchange of information between industrialized countries on adult literacy policy and programming strategies, especially in community, workplace and prison settings; on ways of overcoming obstacles to literacy program participation; on means of encouraging learner participation in program planning; on the effective training and use of volunteers in adult literacy work; on the production of learning materials, including those developed by learners themselves; and on the assessment and reporting of learning" (CMEC 1990: 45)

Clearly, these recommendations apply as much to Canada as to other nations, developed or developing.

Chisman (1989: 17) similarly supplies a list that applies as well to Canada, i.e. the need to:

1. establish clear national goals and track progress toward them;

2. create stronger intellectual, political and institutional focal points for the basic skills effort that will strengthen its intellectual underpinnings and create more effective and better-co-ordinated systems of service delivery and policy;

3. focus squarely on the problems of adults and on workforce literacy;

4. demand systems that produce large gains in basic skills and hold them accountable for achieving those gains;

5. make the necessary investments in technology, training and administration to bring all this about; and

6. build on the strengths of the field now in place, particularly on the strengths of sub-national levels of government, industry, organized labor, volunteers and community-based organizations and on our existing knowledge base.

From a different perspective, Harb (1991) and many others have demanded that literacy should be recognized as a basic human right, although there is considerable discussion as to actual implementation. This is reinforced by the Learner Action Group of Canada (1990), whose statement of recommendations is that within Canadian society:

- that literacy as a right be stated in the Charter of Rights;
- that there is a right to education for all;
- that all student/learners should be consulted on how to improve the education of children;
- that the term "illiterate" not be used in reference to any citizen or group of citizens; and
- that the dignity of the adult student be preserved.

An OECD study (1992) summarizes many of the remedial measures recommended in other publications:

> "These [economic] pressures call for more basic skills training in the workplace, more integration of work-related and non-work-related content, more support for participatory organizational models in both work and training, and closer ties to community organizations and other local interest groups" (p. 57)

CHAPTER 6

RECOMMENDATIONS

The nature of the problem of adult illiteracy in Canada has essentially three components:

- **the remedial component**, i.e. the need to address the skill deficiencies in substantial numbers of adult Canadians;

- **the preventative component**, i.e the need to take steps to prevent young Canadians from reaching adulthood without adequate literacy skills; and the institution of a lifelong learning culture in Canada; and

- **the facilitative component**, i.e. the efforts necessary to provide essential information to those who can not adequately access the literacy tasks and to those who may never be able to read really well.

This facilitative component, while equally important, is a lesser focus of this report in that the issues and recommendations are basically limited to concerns with readability and the use of plain language. Therefore, recommendations are presented in this report, then, for the first two components only.

There are a vast number of agencies, organizations, and individuals that can and must play a part in addressing the issue of adult illiteracy in Canada. Considerable efforts are currently under way, for example, by the National Literacy Secretariat and other federal government departments, national and provincial adult literacy and adult education organizations, colleges and universities, school boards and volunteer organizations, provincial education and training ministries, businesses and industries, researchers and literacy advocates. **However, the efforts are fragmented and, in some cases, flagging. National leadership and co-ordination is critically needed to support and increase the involvement of all those who can and should be involved in dealing with the problem of adult illiteracy.**

From the literacy community, researchers, policy-makers and advocates, a number of general recommendations have been made. Based on all of this, the following **specific recommendations are hereby made** to deal effectively with the adult illiteracy situation in Canada.

Recommendations for action to remedy the adult illiteracy problem in Canada are based on the following premises.

1. Adult illiteracy is a national problem, therefore it requires a national solution.

2. Adult illiteracy is also an individual problem, therefore the solution must enable individual solutions.

3. Adult illiteracy is a long-term, multifaceted problem; therefore, it requires a long-term, collaborative solution.

4. For Canadian society, adult illiteracy is an expensive problem; therefore, it requires an expensive solution.

5. For individual Canadians, the inability to read, write, compute and communicate at a level commensurate with societal demands may have enormous personal costs which the solution must address.

6. The primary stakeholder groups in the adult literacy issue are the actual and potential students, program organizers (program administrators and instructors), program funders (federal and provincial/territorial governments), advocates (national and provincial adult literacy and interest group organizations and unions), employers (business and industry), and the public. All can be expected to be involved in addressing the problem of adult illiteracy.

7. Within the stakeholder group of actual and potential students, there are categories of special need; i.e. aboriginal people, seniors, women, immigrants, workers, handicapped people, school drop-outs and others who have unique needs which must be articulated and addressed. Between the stakeholder groups there are also commonalities which form the basis for sound remedial programs.

8. For purposes of this report, the four major target groups are aboriginals, immigrants, workers, and those who lack basic literacy skills. Two groups have organizations from which they can expect representation, i.e. aboriginals have a number of formal organizations such as the Assembly of First Nations and workers have unions which can and must speak for them. Without formal groups, advocates must be prepared to speak for immigrants and other adults who are without adequate literacy skills.

9. All stakeholders have the right to expect achievement and excellence from programs and initiatives directed at remedying literacy skills deficits.

10. Synergy, collaboration and innovation are required to create and sustain efforts at addressing adult illiteracy. Momentum appears to be waning.

11. Major problems exist for those currently attempting to address the issue of adult illiteracy, i.e. issues and unmet needs related to policy, programs, prevention and other overarching concerns. The major needs are for adequate funding and national co-ordination.

12. Volunteers have done a great deal towards advocacy and remediation; however, there is a urgent need to develop a the field of adult literacy and basic education with trained professional personnel who can expect working conditions equitable with other professional educators and with research into achievement and accountability.

13. No long-term national solutions, policies or practices are possible without support from the public, from the formal education community, and from business and industry.

14. Unless there are significant changes in the current educational system, there will continue to be a large number of young people who exit that system with inadequate literacy skills.

15. As the rate of societal change escalates, the need for adaptability, risk-taking and reform escalates.

Given these premises, the following recommendations are made. First, the federal government should undertake three major initiatives; secondly, provincial and territorial governments, by virtue of their jurisdiction over education, should undertake two major types of initiatives; thirdly, business and industry must take on more responsibility; and finally, there are roles for the formal education system, organizations which represent practitioners and advocate for students, organizations which represent special interest groups, program administrators and instructors/tutors, and the students themselves.

Recommendation #1:

The federal government should create a national policy on adult literacy and basic education that incorporates the complex nature of literacy as an educational, social, economic and political issue.

In order to do so, the federal government should do the following five things.

1.1 Either designate a lead department in such a way that the definition of literacy is not limited to the conceptualization inherent to that department, eg. training or citizenship, or create a new body such as an interdepartmental commission or a new department.

1.2 Adopt the definitions of literacy and related concepts as set out by the Canadian Literacy Thesaurus.

1.3 Liaise extensively with the adult literacy community, special needs populations, the education community, business and industry and the general public.

1.4 Build on the achievements and accumulated wisdom of the National Literacy Secretariat.

1.5 Commit to a policy of full employment for adult Canadians and to the creation of a coherent human resource development program.

In doing so, four of the five policy-related issues and unmet needs are addressed, i.e. a federal policy on adult literacy and basic education would provide for:

- resolution of the problem of conflicting definitions,
- articulation of the interrelated nature of illiteracy with other social problems,
- recognition of the special needs of particular interest groups, and
- increased awareness of the problem by the general public.

Most importantly, a policy of full employment provides the incentive for potential students to become involved in upgrading their skills, i.e., the sacrifices that adults must make to increase their literacy skills must be rewarded with a positive change in living and working conditions.

Achieving a national policy on adult literacy and basic education is made difficult by the fact that education is a provincial jurisdiction. Nevertheless, such a national policy could be grounded in a federal policy on human resource development.

There are vast discrepancies in the resources available to literacy programs within and between provinces, overlaps and gaps in provision of programs and services, and inaccessibility to learning opportunities for many adults in Canada. A national policy is needed to develop and support the systematic provision of adult literacy and basic education programs across Canada which guarantee equity of access and equitable programs to all potential students while adapting to regional and local needs.

The creation of a national policy incorporating the word "education" may be a near impossibility given the provincial jurisdiction over education. While countless other labels might be applied to the concepts of adult literacy and basic education, the necessity to do so should be sublimated. As the rate of societal change escalates, the need for adaptability, risk-taking and reform escalates. Therefore, the federal government, in developing a national policy on adult basic education, should:

- model adaptability, risk-taking and reform.
- rethink, redefine and reform "education" to mean lifelong learning, a right and a responsibility for all.

Recommendation #2:

The federal government should create a national office or department of adult basic education, the role of which would be to:

- **develop and implement a national policy on adult literacy and basic education;**
- **function in an interdepartmental fashion, linking various federal departments;**
- **function in an intergovernmental fashion, linking all provinces in a common effort; and**
- **function as a clearinghouse, a centre for excellence, and a thinktank.**

In order to do so, the federal government should do the following three things.

2.1 Support and utilize the National Adult Literacy Database.

2.2 Liaise with the provincial literacy consultants and the Council of Ministers of Education, the grassroots literacy community through national and provincial literacy organizations, and the local, provincial and national organizations representative of the special needs groups.

2.3 Commit significant financial and human resources.

Synergy, collaboration and innovation are required to create and sustain efforts at addressing adult illiteracy. One role of a national office would be to provide mechanisms for:

- formal and informal co-operation between educators of adults and educators of children and youth;
- formal collaboration between literacy educators across Canada;
- liaison with the international literacy community; and
- liaison with the business community.

In doing so, two of the five policy-related issues and unmet needs are addressed, i.e. a federal office of adult basic education would provide for:

- co-ordination of efforts addressing adult illiteracy, and
- attention to the interests of special needs groups and unique populations.

As well, two of the overarching problems and unmet needs are directly addressed, i.e. a national adult basic education office would provide for:

- increased numbers and kinds of partnerships, and
- a monumental signal of overcoming the current stalemate of perceived and actual inactivity.

A national office, operating in a decentralized fashion with sufficient resources and realistic timelines, eliminates the need for provinces and territories to individually address all six of the program-related issues. It enables the efficient, systematic development and dissemination of methods of:

- facilitating maximum student recruitment, retention and achievement;
- enabling student mobility, transferability and certification;
- improving working conditions and retaining high quality personnel;
- improving teaching materials and approaches;
- increasing the use of appropriate technology; and
- ensuring program evaluation and accountability.

Most importantly, a national policy and national office provide the means to ensure equity of access for students and equity of treatment for literacy workers.

No long-term national solutions, policies or practices are possible without support from the public, from the formal education community, and from business and industry. As a prelude to setting national goals and in the process of developing national policy, one role of a national office would be to undertake a public awareness campaign, in conjunction with national and provincial ministries, adult literacy organizations, and the media.

Recommendation #3:

In a co-ordinated, systematic and realistic fashion, the federal government must allocate the type and amount of long-term financial resources toward adult illiteracy that are directed at similar national issues jeopardizing Canadian prosperity and international competitiveness.

In doing so, the federal government must do the following three things.

3.1 Adequately fund national adult literacy and basic education initiatives such as policy development and national co-ordination.

3.2 Increase funding to the provinces in order to increase the number of remedial programs, the amount of research conducted at universities and elsewhere, and the amount of technology available to students.

3.3 Through federal agencies, provide substantial student support in order that adults may be encouraged to enter and complete remedial programs.

This commitment on the part of the federal government addresses the major need expressed by the literacy community, i.e. the need for ongoing, secure funding. Sufficient financial resources would mean the elimination of ad hoc funding and project-oriented activities, together with the professionalization and development of the field of adult literacy and basic education. Similarly, sufficient student support encourages potential students to enter and remain in programs.

Recommendation #4:

Although literacy is not strictly an educational issue, it has typically been dealt with as such; therefore, the provinces and territories must accept significant responsibility for both the problem and the solutions.

Provincial and territorial governments must create and implement policies on adult literacy and basic education.

In order to do so, provincial/territorial governments must do the following three things.

4.1 Commit the type and amount of long-term financial resources that are directed at other forms of educational programming.

4.2 Redefine education to mean lifelong learning and develop a culture to support that.

4.3 Co-operate with the federal plan to develop a national office of adult basic education.

In doing so, the major issue of inadequate and short-term funding is addressed.

Recommendation #5:

> **Those responsible for the system of educating Canadian youth must examine and reform the current education systems in order to reduce the number of young people exiting with inadequate literacy skills.**

In order to do so, provincial education and training ministries, universities, school boards and professional educators must examine the strengths and flaws of the current educational system with specific attention to literacy acquisition and make appropriate changes, for example:

- insist that all teachers consider the importance of reading to all subject areas and incorporate literacy instruction at all levels;
- ensure that no one fashionable approach be allowed to dominate the teaching of literacy;
- make appropriate efforts to encourage young people to stay in school by adopting the principles of adult education and by making education relevant to contemporary and future society;
- make available current rather than dated technology for use throughout the education system and increase the quality and quantity of computers used;
- change the curriculum to reflect current and future societal needs, especially for global survival; and
- modify current education systems in order to meet the literacy and basic skill demands of business and industry.

In doing so, provincial governments and teacher's associations will assist in addressing the unmet needs for partnerships and prevention related to adult illiteracy; i.e. provincial attention to prevention of adult illiteracy incorporates efforts to lower drop-out rates, reform education and develop a lifelong learning culture.

Recommendation #6:

In creating and implementing national and provincial policy, governments must directly involve those closest to the issue: the actual and potential students.

In order to do so, governments must provide support, financial and otherwise, to a voice for actual and potential adult literacy students. Specifically this means supporting the Learners Action Committee of Canada.

In addition, provincial and national adult literacy organizations, labor unions and adult education institutions must actively and systematically:

- assist students in achieving a voice through development of leadership opportunities and advocacy skill enhancement in individual adult students;
- advocate on behalf of those actual and potential students who do not have the skills, confidence or opportunity to advocate on their own behalf;
- model the importance of student involvement by having students on boards and committees.

In doing so, the unmet need of increased student involvement is addressed.

For individual Canadians, the inability to read and write at a level commensurate with societal demands may have enormous personal costs which the solution must address. In the development and provision of adult literacy and basic education policies and programs, organizers and government ministries must ensure that:

- the dignity of individuals who have literacy problems is protected, and
- the cost of participation in programs is not greater than the benefits.

Attention should be paid, by the media, policy-makers and programs organizers, to ensure that:

- the label "illiterate" is not used for any individual or group of individuals;
- adult literacy and basic education is promoted as a component of lifelong learning; and
- representative, not token stakeholders are included in the development and implementation of programs and policy.

Recommendation #7:

While there are needs common to all adults who lack functional literacy skills, there are unique needs for special populations.

> **In creating and implementing policy on adult literacy and basic education, provincial and federal governments must consult with representatives of the special needs groups.**
>
> **In addition, special interest groups must examine and articulate their uniqueness and special needs related to literacy and basic education. They must be empowered and agreeable to being involved in the solutions to literacy problems.**

In order to do so, special needs groups must be organized in such a fashion that representatives may accurately articulate the unique needs and/or advocates must be organized to do so. There are a variety of target groups or special interest groups, such as aboriginal peoples, immigrants, the unemployed and underemployed, women, seniors, physically handicapped, and others with specific needs.

Some groups, such as aboriginal peoples and seniors, are somewhat better organized and able to provide representative spokespersons. Others, especially immigrants and the unemployed, would probably never have organizations from which to send representation. Therefore, the following initiatives would enhance the examination and articulation of needs of special interest groups:

7.1 Increased student involvement in program and policy development by program providers and governments.

7.2 Increased research into unique needs of special populations and into unique and appropriate solutions to those needs by universities, practitioners and the organizations representing special populations.

7.3 Increased advocacy on behalf of those populations unlikely to have an organized voice, especially those who lack basic literacy skills, by provincial and national adult literacy organizations.

A major role of a national office of adult basic education would be to assist in both the organization of special needs groups for representative purposes and the support to the advocacy on behalf of the unorganized.

Recommendation #8:

All stakeholders in the issue of adult illiteracy have a right to expect student achievement and program excellence.

> **The federal government, while developing national policy and through a national office, should establish national goals, and track progress towards achieving them. Similarly, program providers must help set goals for individuals and groups and track progress towards achieving them.**

In order to do so, the national office of adult basic education must undertake to do the following.

8.1 Work directly with the grassroots adult literacy community and special needs groups to establish realistic goals.

8.2 Provide, through adequate funding, the number of programs commensurate with the need.

8.3 Provide sufficient resources to enable student achievement and programming excellence.

8.4 Demand accountability from programs.

Similarly, in order to demonstrate achievement, program organizers must do the following.

8.5 Articulate individual student goals and undertake systematic student evaluation.

8.6 Establish program goals and undertake systematic evaluation.

In doing so, a number of unmet needs are addressed; i.e. the systematic demonstration of student and program achievement provides for increased student retention and for positive public perception of expenditures through fiscal accountability.

Recommendation #9:

In their support to adult literacy and basic education, through policy and funding, provincial and federal governments must accept that adult illiteracy cannot be remedied by volunteers and special projects.

In order to do so, governments must adequately fund programs to ensure that:

- high-quality, trained adult literacy educators are available;
- salaries and working conditions are conducive to long-term employment;
- research and program enhancement is ongoing.

In doing so, the field of adult literacy and program development will be enabled to engage in a degree of unprecedented professionalization and credibility.

Recommendation #10:

The source for trained professional educators and research has typically been universities; therefore, universities must accept significant responsibility for both the problem and the solutions.

Universities should examine their contribution to problems in the school system that result in adult illiteracy and to solutions that increase adult literacy program achievement and excellence.

Any new initiative such as the above puts strains on already strained finances. Unless there are additional financial resources, universities will not be able, as they should, to:

10.1 examine the current practice of teacher education as it relates to problems with the current school system;

10.2 undertake increased research in adult literacy and basic education;

10.3 develop and offer undergraduate degree programs in adult education and adult basic education.

Conceivably, some universities might be encouraged by a national organization or office to rechannel existing resources into adult literacy initiatives.

Should universities accept these responsibilities, the currently unmet need for professional personnel, and for increased knowledge of appropriate teaching approaches and unique needs of special populations will be addressed.

Recommendation #11:

Adult illiteracy represents significant cost or loss to business and industry in Canada; therefore, employers should be actively involved in skill enhancement of employees.

> **Business and industry, whether owned by Canadians or by non-Canadians, must invest in the skill enhancement of all workers.**

In order to do so, employers must be convinced by their own industries and associations that educational programs aimed at enhancing the functional literacy skills of workers are an investment rather than an expense. Here there is a role for national and provincial literacy organizations, labor unions and other student advocates, and the media to change the current thinking of employers about literacy training for workers. There is also a role for researchers, as there is little concrete advice about what constitutes programming excellence for worker education.

Recommendation #12:

> **Those who organize and provide programs, i.e. paid and volunteer administrators and teachers, must ensure student achievement and program excellence.**

In order to ensure student achievement, the following five things must be accomplished.

12.1 Those who teach must have adequate training and appropriate remuneration.

12.2 Students should be consulted with regard to individual and program goals.

12.3 Programs should be formally evaluated in a systematic fashion.

12.4 Non-formal research should be an ongoing activity.

12.5 Personnel should have opportunities to collaborate with and learn with other professional educators.

12.6 The unique needs of special groups such as immigrants, aboriginals and workers must be articulated from the student's perspective and incorporated into programs and policies.

12.7 It must be recognized that learning enhanced literacy skills can take a considerable amount of time and effort; therefore, students must not be pressured with unreasonable timelines and financial constraints.

In doing so, many of the program-related issues and unmet needs are addressed. Program personnel have a responsibility and a right to be integrally involved in decisions made about adult literacy education.

In conclusion, those who have been working on the front lines to address the adult illiteracy problem in Canada, i.e. program personnel and literacy advocates, have expended an enormous amount of unpaid time and energy. The Canadian public and politicians have become aware of the magnitude of the problem and there is little more that the adult literacy community can do without more commitment and funding from those who can provide both, i.e governments and business.

CHAPTER 7

REFERENCES

Adieseshiah, M.S. (1990). *Illiteracy and poverty*. Geneva: Unesco, International Bureau of Education.

Alberta Advanced Education. (1990). *Report on the Alberta Literacy Inventory*. Edmonton.

Alberta Association for Adult Literacy. (1989). *AAAL Handbook*. Medicine Hat, AB: AAAL.

Anderson, E.E. (1989). "Adult basic education programs in Canada." In M.C. Tayor and J.A. Draper (Eds.) *Adult literacy perspectives*. Toronto: Culture Concepts.

Anthony, R., et al. (1991). *Evaluating literacy: A perspective for change*. Toronto: Irwin.

Barton, D., & Hamilton, M. E. (1990). *Researching literacy in industrialized countries: Trends and prospects*. Hamburg: Unesco Institute for Education.

Bell, J. H. (1991, May). *Rural literacy issues in Alberta*. Paper presented at the Literacy Issues in Rural Canada Conference, Ottawa, ON.

Bell, J. H. (1991). "Using peer response groups in ESL writing classes." In A. G. Konrad (Ed.). Everyone's challenge. *Proceedings of the 1990 Literacy Conference*. (pp. 51-53). Edmonton, Alberta: University of Alberta.

Bhola, H.S. (1990). *Literacy for survival and for more than mere survival*. Geneva: Unesco, International Bureau of Education.

Bhola, H.S. (1989). "Adult literacy in the development of nations: An international perspective." In M.C. Tayor and J.A. Draper (Eds.) *Adult literacy perspectives*. Toronto: Culture Concepts.

Boraks, N. (1988). "Balancing adult literacy research and program evaluation." *Adult Literacy and Basic Education*, 12(2).

Boyd, M. (1991). "Gender, nativity and literacy: Proficiency and training issues." In *Adult literacy in Canada: Results of a national study*. (pp. 85-93). Ottawa, ON: Statistics Canada.

Brand, E. (1987). "Functional illiteracy in industrialized countries." *Prospects: Towards International Literacy Year*, 22(2), 17-27.

Brizius, J., & Foster, S. (1987). *Enhancing adult literacy: A policy guide*. Washington, DC: Council of State Policy and Planning Agencies.

Brookfield, S.D. (1986). *Understanding and facilitating adult learning*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Burnaby, B. (1992). "Adult literacy issues in Canada." *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 12, 156-171.

Business Council for Effective Literacy (1987). *Job-related basic skills. A guide for planners of employee programs*. Washington, DC: BCEL.

_____ (1990). "Standardized tests: Their use and misuse." *BCEL Newsletter* (January), 22, 1, 6-9.

Calamai, P. (1991). Keynote address. In A. G. Konrad (Ed.). *Everyone's challenge. Proceedings of the 1990 Literacy Conference*. (pp. 54-55). Edmonton, Alberta: University of Alberta.

Calamai, P. (1987). *Broken words: Why five million Canadians are illiterate*. Toronto: Southam.

Canadian Association for Adult Education. (1985). *An analysis of the Statistics Canada Adult Education Survey*. Toronto: author.

Canadian Business Task Force on Literacy. (1988). *Measuring the costs of illiteracy in Canada*. Ottawa: author.

Carnevale, A.P., Gainer, L.J., & Meltzer, A.S. (1990). *Workplace basics*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Centre for educational research and innovation. (1992). *Adult illiteracy and economic performance*. Paris: Author.

Cetron, M., & Gayle, M. (1991). *Educational renaissance: Our schools at the turn of the twenty-first century*. New York: St. Martin's Press.

Challis, S. (1991). *Methods to increase the number of successful transfers between programs by students in adult literacy programming*. (Research report for the Literacy Workers' Alliance of Manitoba). Multiculturalism and Citizenship Canada.

Chang, K. (1991). "Evaluating workplace literacy programs." In M. C. Taylor, G. R. Lewe, & J. A. Draper. (Eds.). *Basic skills for the workplace*. (pp. 465-480). Toronto, ON: Culture Concepts.

Chang, K.L. (1989). "Literacy in the workplace." In M. Taylor & J. Draper (Eds.), *Adult literacy perspectives* (pp. 413-422). Toronto: Culture Concepts.

Chang, K.L. (1988). "Organizing adult literacy and basic education in Alberta." *Learning*, 5(1) 18-21.

Chisholm, S. (1988). "Literacy: Democracy's basic ingredient." *Adult literacy and basic education*, 12(2).

Chisman, F.P., & Associates. (1990). *Leadership for literacy: The agenda for the 1990s*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Chisman, F.P. (1989). *Jump start: The federal role in adult literacy*. Washington, DC: Southport Institute for Policy Analysis.

Collins, M., & Hanson, J. (1991). "Prepackaged formats or participatory approaches? Relevant options and strategies for adult literacy practitioners." In A. G. Konrad (Ed.). Everyone's challenge. *Proceedings of the 1990 Literacy Conference*. (pp. 56-58). Edmonton, Alberta: University of Alberta.

Conference Board of Canada. (1990). *The impact of employee illiteracy on Canadian business*. Ottawa: author.

Cool, J. C. (1991). "Dropping in and dropping out: A survey by the Canadian Youth Foundation." In A. G. Konrad (Ed.). *Everyone's challenge. Proceedings of the 1990 Literacy Conference*. (p. 79). Edmonton, Alberta: University of Alberta.

Darkenwald, G., & Valentine, T. (1984). *Outcomes and impact of adult basic education*. New Brunswick, NJ: Centre for Adult Development, Rutgers University.

Darville, R. (in press). "The university and literacy: Trends in North America." In L. Limage (Ed.), *Literacy and the role of the university*. Paris, Unesco.

Darville, R. (1989). "The language of experience and the literacy of power." In M. Taylor and J. Draper (Eds.), *Adult literacy perspectives*, pp. 25-40. Toronto: Culture Concepts.

Darville, R. (1988). *Adult literacy and public policy: Report of an international seminar*. University of British Columbia: Centre for Policy Studies in Education.

Davis, D.M. (1991). "Adult literacy programs: Toward equality or maintaining the status quo?" *Journal of Reading*, 35(1), 34-37.

De Castell, S., Luke, A., & MacLennan, D. (1986). "On defining literacy." In S. de Castell, A. Luke, and K. Egan (Eds.), *Literacy, society and schooling: A reader*, (pp. 3-14). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

DesLauriers, R. C. (1990). *The impact of employee illiteracy on Canadian business*. (Report 58-90-E). Ottawa: Conference Board of Canada.

Diekhoff, G. (1988). "An appraisal of adult literacy programs: Reading between the lines." *Journal of Reading*, 8(7), 624-630.

Draper, J. (1989). "A historical view of literacy." In M.C. Taylor and J.A. Draper (Eds.), *Adult literacy perspectives*. Toronto: Culture Concepts.

Drucker, P.F. (1990). *The new realities: In government and politics/in economics and business/in society and world view*. New York: Harper and Row.

Dunn, W.N. (1981). *Public policy analysis*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc.

Economic Council of Canada. (1992). *A lot to learn*. Ottawa: author.

Economic Council of Canada. (1990). *Good jobs, bad jobs: Employment in the service economy*. Ottawa: Supply and Services Canada.

Fagan , W. T. (1990, May). "Literacy for participation in the economy." Paper presented at the Annual Convention of the Canadian Council of Teachers of English. Halifax, NS.

Fagan, W. T. (1991). "Effective programs for adult literacy instruction: The L-I-T-E-R-A-T-E program." In A. G. Konrad (Ed.). Everyone's challenge. *Proceedings of the 1990 Literacy Conference*. (pp. 44-46). Edmonton, Alberta: University of Alberta.

Faulk, J. (1991, September). "Myths about literacy." In *The future contributions to literacy in Canada*. Papers for consideration at the workshops for the special meeting of the sub-commission of education on "the future contributions to literacy in Canada".

Fennell, B.H. (1985). *The Determination of the Goals of Basic Education for Alberta: A Case Study in Political Decision-Making in Education*. Unpublished PhD Dissertation, University of Alberta, Edmonton.

Fingeret, A., & Jurmo, P. (Eds.) (1989). *Participatory literacy education*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Foster, S.E. (1990). "Upgrading the skills of literacy professionals: The profession matures." In F.P. Chisman and Associates (Eds.) *Leadership for literacy*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Fox, B.J. (1990). "Teaching reading in the 1990s: The strengthened focus on accountability." *Journal of Reading*, 33(5):336-339.

Gabriel Dumont Institute of Native Studies and Applied Research Inc. (undated). *Literacy for Metis and non-status Indian peoples: A national strategy*. Saskatoon: Author.

Giere, U. (1987). *Functional illiteracy in industrialized countries: An analytical bibliography*. Hamburg: Unesco Institute for Education.

Goetz, D. (1991). "Literacy for the blind and visually impaired." In A. G. Konrad (Ed.). Everyone's challenge. *Proceedings of the 1990 Literacy Conference*. (pp. 54-55). Edmonton, Alberta: University of Alberta.

Hamadache, A. (1990). *Literacy, human rights and peace*. Geneva: Unesco, International Bureau of Education.

Hamadache, A. & Martin, D. (1986). *Theory and practice of literacy work, policies, strategies and examples*. Ottawa: Unesco and Canadian Organization for Development through Education.

Hautecoeur, J. P. (1990). "Generous supply, flagging demand: The current paradox of literacy." In J. P. Hautecoeur (Ed.). *Alpha 90*. (pp. 129-141). Hamburg, Germany: UNESCO Institute for Education.

Hautecoeur, J. (1989). "Generous supply, barred demand: The current paradox of literacy." In M.C. Tayor and J.A. Draper (Eds.) *Adult literacy perspectives*. Toronto: Culture Concepts.

Hautecoeur, J.P. (1989). "Critical readings of illiteracy." *Education et Francophonie*, 17 (2):17-25.

Heathington, B.S. (1987). "Expanding the definition of literacy for adult remedial readers." *Journal of reading*, 31(3), 213-217.

Hirsch, D. (1991). "Literacy and international competitiveness: The relevance of Canada's survey." In *Adult literacy in Canada: Results of a national study*. (pp. 61-62). Ottawa, ON: Statistics Canada.

Holmes, M. (1989). "Education: Problems and solutions." *Inside Guide*, 3(5), 59.

Horsman, J. (1989). "From the learners' voice: Women's experience of il/literacy." In M.C. Tayor and J.A. Draper (Eds.) *Adult literacy perspectives*. Toronto: Culture Concepts.

Hunter, L. (1990). *A Search for the meaning of becoming literate: An interpretive inquiry*. Victoria, BC: National Literacy Secretariat and B.C. Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology.

Ilsley, P.J. (1985). "Policy forumulation in adult literacy voluntarism." *Adult literacy and basic education*, 9(3), 154-162.

Jean, M. (1989). "Implications of technological change for adult education." In M. Taylor & J. Draper (Eds.), *Adult literacy perspectives*, p. 113-118. Toronto: Culture Concepts.

Jones, S. (1991). "Literacy programming and the Survey of Literacy Skills Used in Daily Activities." In *Adult literacy in Canada: Results of a national study*. (pp. 95-101). Ottawa, ON: Statistics Canada.

Jones, S. (1991, September). "Schools and literacy." In *The future contributions to literacy in Canada*. Papers for consideration at the workshops for the special meeting of the sub-commission of education on "the future contributions to literacy in Canada". (Ch. 1).

King, A., & Schneider, B. (1991). *The first global revolution: A report of the Club of Rome*. New York: Pantheon Books.

Klevins, C. (Ed.) (1987). *Materials and methods in adult and continuing education: international - illiteracy*. Los Angeles: Klevens Publications.

Knowles, M.S. (1971). *The modern practice of adult education*. New York: Association Press.

Levine, K. (1990). *The future of literacy and literacies of the future*. Geneva: Unesco, International Bureau of Education.

Limage, L. (1990). *Illiteracy in industrialized countries: Realities and myths*. Geneva: Unesco, International Bureau of Education.

Lind, A. (1990). *Mobilizing women for literacy*. Geneva: Unesco, International Bureau of Education.

Lortie, P. (1990, Oct. 24). "Getting more bang for education buck." *The Globe and Mail*.

Lortie, P. (1990, Oct. 8). "Time to look again at the education of Canadians." *The Globe and Mail*.

Mayor, F. (1990). *International literacy year: Opportunity and challenge*. Geneva: Unesco, International Bureau of Education.

Mellan, J. R. (1991). "The computer curriculum corporation instructional system." In A.G. Konrad (Ed.). Everyone's challenge. *Proceedings of the 1990 Literacy Conference*. (pp. 47-50). Edmonton, Alberta: University of Alberta.

Miller, L. (1990). *Illiteracy and human rights*. Ottawa: National Literacy Secretariat.

Moore, A. & Westell, T. (1989). "Voluntarism in community based literacy." In M.C. Tayor and J.A. Draper (Eds.) *Adult literacy perspectives*. Toronto: Culture Concepts.

Morrison, I. (1991). "Implications for adult education." In *Adult literacy in Canada: Results of a national study*. (pp. 63-64). Ottawa, ON: Statistics Canada.

Motherwell, C. (1990, Nov. 27). "Illiteracy misunderstood by Canadians, Decima poll finds." *The Globe and Mail*.

Movement for Canadian Literacy. (1987). *Literacy in Canada: The next decade*. Toronto: author.

Nahanee, R. (1991, September). "Literacy and aboriginal peoples." In *The future contributions to literacy in Canada*. Papers for consideration at the workshops for the special meeting of the sub-commission of education on "the future contributions to literacy in Canada". (Ch. 5).

Nascimento, G. (1990). *Illiteracy in figures*. Geneva: Unesco, International Bureau of Education.

National Literacy Secretariat. (1990). *Partners in literacy. National literacy program. An overview of projects*. Ottawa, ON: Author.

O'Neill, T., & Sharpe, A. (1991). "Functional illiteracy: Economic costs and labour market implications." In *Adult literacy in Canada: Results of a national study*. (pp. 69-78). Ottawa, ON: Statistics Canada.

One Voice, the Canadian Seniors' Network. (1989). *Illiteracy and older Canadians: An unrecognized problem*. Ottawa: author.

Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. (1989). *Schools and quality*. Paris: author.

Panzeri, A. (1990, Oct. 22). "Easy as A, B, C? Experts say there's no simple solution to Canada's illiteracy problem." *The Edmonton Journal*, C1.

Panzeri, A. (1990, Oct. 12). "Education system blamed for illiteracy." *The Edmonton Journal*.

Pollard, M. J. (1991). *PAL Project evaluation* (final report). Lethbridge, AB: University of Lethbridge, Faculty of Education.

Raymond, J. (1990, Oct. 12) "Education is Canada's worst subject." *The Globe and Mail*.

Ross, D. P. (1991). "Literacy and old age in Canada: The results of the LSUDA survey." In *Adult literacy in Canada: Results of a national study*. (pp. 67-68). Ottawa, ON: Statistics Canada.

Roy-Singh, R. (1990). *Adult literacy as educational process*. Geneva: Unesco, International Bureau of Education.

Rubenson, K. (1989). "The economics of adult basic education." In M. Taylor, G. Lewe, & J. Draper (Eds.), *Adult literacy perspectives*, p. 387-398. Toronto: Culture Concepts.

Scane, J., Guy, A. M., & Wenstrom, L. (1991). *Think, write, share: Process writing for adult ESL and Basic Education students*. Toronto, ON: Ontario Institute for Studies in Education.

Sticht, T. (1991). "Adult literacy education." *Review of Research in Education*, 15, 59-85.

Sticht, T., & McDonald, B. (1990). *Teach the mother and reach the child: Literacy across generations*. Geneva: Unesco, International Bureau of Education.

Sticht, T. & Mikulecky, L. (1984). *Job-related basic skills: Cases and conclusions. Columbus, OH: ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career and Vocational Education*, Ohio State University.

Street, B.V. (1990). *Cultural meanings of literacy*. Geneva: Unesco, International Bureau of Education.

Taylor, M.C., & Draper, J.A. (Eds.) (1989). *Adult literacy perspectives*. Toronto: Culture Concepts.

Thomas, A. (1991). *Beyond education: A new perspective on society's management of learning*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Thomas, A. (1989). "Definitions and evolution of the concepts." In M.C. Tayor and J.A. Draper (Eds.), *Adult literacy perspectives*. Toronto: Culture Concepts.

Thomas, A. (1983). *Adult illiteracy in Canada: A challenge*. Occasional paper No. 42. Ottawa: Canadian Commission for UNESCO.

Thomas, Audrey. (1990). *The reluctant learner: A research report on nonparticipation and dropout in literacy programs in British Columbia*. Victoria: British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology.

Thomas, A.M., Tayor, M., & Gaskin, C. (1989). "Federal legislation and adult basic education in Canada." In M.C. Talyor and J.A. Draper (Eds.), *Adult literacy perspectives*. Toronto: Culture Concepts.

Thorsell, W. (1990, Oct. 13). "Vested interests keep Canada's students near bottom of the world class." *The Globe and Mail.*

Toffler, A. (1990). *Powershift: Knowledge, wealth, and violence at the edge of the 21st century*. New York: Bantam Books.

Turk, J.L. (1989). "Literacy: A labor perspective." A speech made to the Ontario Federal of Labour, Toronto, Ontario.

Unesco. (1990). *Worldwide action in education*. Paris: Unesco.

Wagner, D.A. (1990). *Literacy and research: Past, present and future*. Geneva: Unesco, International Bureau of Education.

Wagner, S. (1989). Literacy development and research in French in Canada. *Revue Quebecoise de Psychologie*, 10 (3):125-148.

Westgate, B. (1990, Oct. 12). "US author delivers telling words on success of literacy year." *The Edmonton Journal.*

Wolfe, M. (1990, Sept. 13). "We need a forum for vigorous debate about our schools." *The Globe and Mail*, p. A9.

APPENDIX A:

Details of Methodology in Data Gathering

1. Data Sources:

1.1 literature (private libraries, U of A library, material supplied by Prosperity Secretariat)

1.2 research (private libraries, National Adult Literacy Database, Educational Resources in Circulation ERIC)

1.3 inventory of initiatives (NALD search, telephone surveys with individuals representing organizations)

1.4 assessment of initiatives for four target groups (NALD search, literature review, interviews with key individuals)

1.5 issues, concerns and recommendations (faxed questionnaire to 72 individuals in the literacy community, interviews with key individuals)

2. Method For Assessing Key Target Groups

In the compilation of this report, information was obtained from a variety of sources:

1. interviews with governmental personnel including CEIC, The National Literacy Secretariat, and personnel from the Conference Board of Canada;

2. interviews with staff members of the Assembly of First Nations in Ottawa;

3. a comprehensive review of the literature dealing with adult literacy and its corollary;

4. a comprehensive review of documents produced by the Economic Council of Canada, the CEIC, The Labor Force Development Board, and the Conference Board of Canada.

In addition, a search of the materials contained in the National Adult Literacy Databank was conducted to derive relevant statistical data and programming data.

3. National And Provincial Organizations Contacted

Twenty-three national and provincial/territorial literacy organizations were contacted by phone and asked the following five questions:

1. What is being done in the field of adult literacy and by whom? (Program particulars)

2. What is not being done in the field of adult literacy? (Unmet needs and challenges)

3. Are their any particular attitude problems that affect the effectiveness of program intervention? (Attitudes)

4. What partnerships exit? Need to be strengthened? Established? (Partnerships)

5. What costs are involved? Who pays? (Costs)

A few literacy organizations or organizations which include a literacy component were not included in this report. The Conference Board of Canada, Canada Post, Employment and Immigration Commission, and Indian and Northern Affairs have made significant contributions to adult literacy. Unfortunately, they were not available for comment within the time frame of this report.

3.1 National organizations contacted for this survey:

ABC Canada
Joanne Linzey (416) 442-2292

Canadian Alliance for Literacy
John MacDonald

Frontier College
(416) 923-3591

National Adult Literacy Data Base
Tamara Ilersich (519) 659-3125

Movement for Canadian Literacy
John MacDonald (613) 563-2464

The Centre for Literacy
Dawson College
Linda Shohet (514) 931-8731

Literacy Speakers Service
Maureen Medved (604) 224-2384

World Literacy of Canada
(416) 465-4667

Laubach Literacy
(514) 248-2898

Feminist Literacy Workers Network
Aisla Thomson (416) 699-2145

UNESCO
Mariette Hoag (613) 598-4327

3.2 Provincial literacy organizations contacted for this survey:

Alberta Association for Adult Literacy
Mary Norton (403) 433-2360

Newfoundland and Labrador Literacy Coalition
Bob Evans (709) 722-9892

Ontario Literacy Coalition
Elisse Zack (416) 963-5787

Saskatchewan Adult Basic Education Association
Elsie Livingston (306) 763-7745

3.3 Organizations, which include a literacy component, contacted for this survey:

Salvation Army Literacy Centre
(John MacDonald)

Royal Canadian Legion
Larry Gray (613) 235-4391

United Way of Canada
(John MacDonald)

Canadian Federation of Labour
Carol MacLeod (613) 234-4141

One Voice: The Seniors Network
Ivan Hale (613) 238-7624

Public Policy Forum
(613) 238-7160

Council of Ministers of Education
Nicole Daveneau (416) 964-2551

Canadian Association of Adult Education
Ian Morrison (416) 964-0559

Canadian Library Association
Karen Adams (613) 232-9625

3.4 Key individuals interviewed

Margaret Scopek
Canadian Labor Force Development Board

Cathy Chapman
National Literacy Secretariat
(re: evaluation)

Ruth Norton
Assembly of First Nations

Senator Joyce Fairbairn
Senate of Canada

Phil Godon
Canadian Employment and Immigration Commission

Brigid Hayes
National Literacy Secretariat
(re: workplace literacy)

David Shepardson
Conference Board of Canada

Sue Smee
National Literacy Secretariat
(re: national policy, aboriginal literacy)

APPENDIX B:

An Inventory of Research in Canada

1. Current Research at Canadian Universities

Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, Toronto

OISE has analyzed innovative approaches to literacy in Canada to find out what works and what doesn't. The research included case studies and evaluation of methods.

The institute is currently engaged in a joint study of literacy with an African Literacy Centre. OISE will be sending a representative to the African group to help them set up this centre. They hope this exchange of ideas will be beneficial to both countries.

Brock University, Ontario

All incoming students to Brock University for the past five years have been assessed as to their literacy levels. They are examining patterns with an eye to helping their incoming students' needs.

They also have a research team analyzing home and family literacy.

Memorial University, Newfoundland

Researchers at Memorial are trying to find out why Newfoundland has such a high illiteracy rate (44%). A number of factors are being examined; education levels, the value that families place on education, the difference between urban and rural living, job satisfaction and job needs, etc. They are discovering that in general, Newfoundlanders place a lower value on literacy to achieve a good life.

As well, they are engaged in two other family literacy studies. They are looking at how adults influence the acquisition of literacy in very young children, and are examining the relationship between family learning goals and values and literacy levels.

University of Victoria, British Columbia

Education students are involved in a research project examining the factors which motivate adults to return to high school.

Acadia University, Nova Scotia

The university has set up a literacy committee which made a number of recommendations to the university; among them a literacy across the curriculum thrust, and a peer tutoring program for students. These have not been implemented yet.

University of Alberta

Researchers at the University of Alberta are just finishing up a three-year study examining the change in employment levels of people who regularly attend literacy programs.

They are also engaged in a study with a bilingual ESL class to determine whether being literate in the first language helps to learn literacy skills in another.

University of Calgary, Alberta

The U of C regularly publishes a journal, *Reflections in Canadian Literacy* which deals with recent challenges in literacy.

University of Ottawa, Ontario

Researchers at the U of O have conducted a study into literacy among francophones between the ages of 16 and 25 in Ottawa, Sudbury and Toronto.

Literacy Courses Offered and Other Challenges

In addition to the research projects noted above, a number of courses to train adult literacy practitioners are being offered at Canadian universities. OISE offers two graduate courses in adult literacy, one in the master's level and one in the doctoral level. St. Thomas University, New Brunswick, offers one course in adult literacy.

The University of Victoria will be implementing one undergraduate course called Acquisition of Literacy in its curriculum next year and Memorial University is also looking at the possibility of offering teaching courses in adult literacy. Dalhousie University, Nova Scotia, offers two master's level courses in adult literacy and a number of courses in adult literacy are currently offered at the University of Calgary in both the undergraduate and graduate levels. With the increase in numbers of courses being offered by Canadian universities, it can be assumed that much more research will be carried out in years to come.

The University of Prince Edward Island admits they have done very little to tackle the adult literacy problem so far. The only offering they have is one practitioner's course in ESL. The U of Toronto, as well, said they offer very little and referred to OISE. Most of their research is carried out there.

Most of the universities with adult literacy courses said that their students regularly tutor as volunteers in local literacy programs. Education students at the U of Saskatchewan have been involved in the PALS program.

2. Research Found In The Literature Of The Field

- Private sector involvement is occurring by such organizations as ABC Canada whose objectives include public awareness about prevention and remedial aspects of literacy and to become a central site of information on literacy programs for the private sector (Calamai 1991, p. 31).

- Research by Fagan (1991), in the development of effective programs for adult literacy, indicated the need for a "fine balance between the role of the instructor and the role of the learner" (p. 45). He suggested that a co-operative learning experience must be created where learners are active participants in the process of learning and in monitoring their own progress (p. 45).

- The Canadian Youth Foundation has conducted a survey of early school leavers who have entered literacy programs in an attempt to develop literacy programs that are capable of attracting more youth and are more able to meet their needs (Cool 1991).

- Multiculturalism and Citizenship Canada has funded research in transfers between community-based and institution-based literacy programs (Challis 1991).

- Joyce Scane and others (1991) have engaged in research with 200 students to determine the effectiveness of process writing methods for ESL and Basic Education students. The process writing approach and the use of computers were discovered to have a definite motivating effect on the adults.

3. Research Needs Identified In The Literature

- There appears to be a need for literacy programs in the workplace. Ross (1991) noted that among firms surveyed by the Conference Board of Canada, approximately 25 percent have systematic human resource policies or programs and fewer have programs specifically for functional illiteracy.

- An investigation of the nature and effectiveness of various literacy programs and training methods appears to be necessary (Boyd 1991, Chang 1991). The OECD (1992) report suggested that such an investigation should include the workplace and, in particular, innovations in remedial literacy and basic skills programs that are in place in larger organizations.

- There appears to be an acute shortage of educators, materials and equipment for literacy programs serving the blind and visually impaired. Goetz (1991), referring to a survey of literacy programs in Canada, indicated that only two programs were equipped with facilities to provide instruction for blind and visually impaired students.

- A recommendation arising from *Literacy for Metis and Non-status Indian Peoples: A National Strategy* was for a national literacy needs assessment of Metis and non-status Indian people.

- Barton and Hamilton (1990) indicated a need to research the diversity of literacy needs within the country, to evaluate the various programs that exist in adult literacy and to study the relationship between literacy and linguistic minorities.

- High drop-out rates and a lack of attendance by many individuals who require literacy training suggests a need to determine why students do not attend or drop out of literacy programs (Hautecoeur 1990).

- Boyd (1991) recommended that immigrants in general, and foreign-born women in particular should be the focus of literacy programs as a higher percentage of foreign-born women are categorized as having very limited reading skills compared to foreign-born males or to Canadian-born men and women.

APPENDIX C:

A Sampling of Canadian Literacy Resources

The number of literacy resources in this country is vast. NALD has more than 500 listed on its database. These include those published not only in Canada, but in the United States and elsewhere.

Literacy resources seem to fall into a few broad categories: 1) teaching materials, 2) literacy organization how-to, 3) student readers and workbooks, 4) student written materials, 5) academic articles/research findings and 6) plain language materials. The following are some examples.

TEACHING MATERIALS

- *Teaching Adult Beginning Readers: To Reach Them My Hand* by Alan Frager and published by the College Reading Association is an example of a literacy teacher-training manual. It includes chapters on assessment of adult beginning readers, instructional strategies, and more.

- *Journeyworkers* published by Access Network, Alberta has been used for about five years to train volunteer tutors in literacy programs in Alberta.

- Laubach Literacy of Canada has an instruction manual on how to obtain and use experience stories, followed by six lessons for students. It is called *Getting Started With Experience Stories,* and is available from Laubach Publishing, Saint John, New Brunswick.

LITERACY ORGANIZATION HOW-TO

- Saskatchewan Literacy Network's *Making Links* is an example of a literacy how-to manual. It has instructions on how to develop a provincial literacy network.

- Frontier College's *Manual for Family Literacy* talks about family literacy, what it is and how to achieve it.

- Movement for Canadian Literacy's *Good Practice Document* might also fit into this category. It includes the policies and workings of the MCL.

- Another handbook for literacy practitioners is *The Land That We Dream Of...* published by OISE. It explores the practice and theory of community-based literacy by offering an in-depth look at three different programs—their mandates, their physical environments and their day-to-day operations.

- Still another how-to handbook for developing a community based literacy program is *Partnerships in Literacy: A Guide for Community Organization and Program Development* by Wendy Watson and Barbara Bate and published by Fraser Valley College, B.C.

Student Readers and Workbooks

- The six books in the Pine Candle Adult New Reader Series, published jointly by Lone Pine Publishing, Edmonton, Alberta and the Alberta Association for Adult Literacy, are designed for the adult who reads at about grade 4-6 level. They can be used with or without an instructor.

- Laubach Publications' *Life Skills Series* instructs students on money management and coping with job-created situations. It should be noted that Laubach Literacy has published many student readers and workbooks and offers a teaching program which moves the student through, level by level.

- Billed as "one of the best available resources for assessment" by NALD, *This is Not A Test Kit for New Readers* by Elsa Auerbach and published by Pippin Publishing, Markham, Ontario, is a kit containing intermediate-level exercises for self-evaluation. Students can do the exercises by themselves, in a learning group, or with the help of a tutor.

Student Written Materials

- Student written materials abound. Many programs regularly publish student writings in the form of a newsletter or journal. Fairview College's (Fairview, Alberta) *Northern Storytellers* is an anthology of student writings from northern Alberta.

- *Memories and Dreams, Volume 1 & 2* is another example of student written material. A compilation of student writings from all over the province, it is published by the Saskatchewan Literacy Network

- An example from the feminist perspective is *Telling Our Stories Our Way* published by the Feminist Literacy Network (Canadian Council on Learning Opportunities for Women).

- There are many more student written materials. East End Literacy in Toronto regularly guides students through the writing process from idea to finished product. Dominie Press, Ontario publishes these books.

Academic Articles/Research Findings

- *Adult Literacy in Canada: Results of a National Study* by Statistics Canada is an example of research findings in adult literacy.

- Another book with almost the same name has been published by the Council of Minister's of Education. *Adult Literacy in Canada* is the compilation of their research.

- *Foundations of Literacy Policy* in Canada by Linda Phillips and Stephen Norris and published by Detselig Enterprises, Calgary, Alberta, represents the views on literacy of leading Canadian scholars from a wide variety of disciplines.

- A handbook which looks at whole language as it applies to adult literacy is *Whole Language: A Framework for Thinking About Literacy work With Adults* by Joyce White and Mary Norton and published by the National Literacy Secretariat.

Plain Language Material

- Mohawk College's (Hamilton, Ontario) *Access to WHMIS* is an example of plain language instructional materials. It was not designed primarily as a teaching tool, but as an instructional package on making workers with lower reading skills familiar with the new Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System. This handbook has simplified text with pictures and includes practice exercises. It is intended to be used with an instructor.

- The Canadian Library Association has written a plain language brochure on how to use the public library, and the Lawrence Heights Community Health Centre has written a number of books for women, two of them are *Coping With Our Stress*, and *Women's Health Fact Sheets.*

The above is merely a sampling of the resources available; a complete listing of resources is available through NALD.

APPENDIX D:

Annotated Bibliography

Aitkens, A. (1991). *A national literacy strategy for older Canadians*. Ottawa: One Voice, The Canadian Seniors Network.

This paper outlines the literacy circumstances surrounding Canadian seniors and provides a three-year plan to address illiteracy problems. The recommendations for specific action include a call to raise the general awareness of society of the existence of low literacy among older Canadians; to sensitize researchers in the fields of gerontology and literacy to each other's work and findings, and to encourage cross-fertilization of ideas and insights. Included as well are specific strategies to improve literacy levels among seniors and to improve supports for seniors with low literacy levels.

Alberta Advanced Education. (1990). *Report on the Alberta Literacy Inventory*. Edmonton.

This document provides a report on the extent and nature of literacy programming in the province of Alberta. Rather than an evaluation of current programs, the purpose was to enumerate and describe what was being done to satisfy the literacy needs of adult Albertans.

Barton, D., & Hamilton, M. E. (1990). *Researching literacy in industrialized countries: Trends and prospects*. Hamburg: Unesco Institute for Education.

This report analyzes the trends and prospects of research in the area of adult illiteracy in industrialized countries and considers its impact on research in primary education. Two specific aspects of this report include an outline of international and national agendas for literacy and details of the methods and results of selected large-scale studies undertaken during the past twenty years in industrialized countries.

B.C. Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology. (1989). *Opening doors to lifelong learning: Empowering undereducated adults*. Victoria: The Provincial Literacy Advisory Committee to the Minister of Advanced Education, Training and Technology.

This document outlines adult literacy and basic education initiatives in B.C., a strategy of new programs and expanded services, and special concerns. A list of thirty-four specific recommendations incorporates such plans as a blueprint for college involvement, support to community and workplace programs, development of networking, assessment and resource procedures.

Bell, J. H. (1991, May). "Rural literacy issues in Alberta." Paper presented at the Literacy Issues in Rural Canada Conference, Ottawa, ON.

The results of a questionnaire distributed to literacy workers in rural Alberta is the basis of this paper. The focus of the questionnaire included distinctive features of literacy issues in rural areas, strengths and weaknesses of literacy efforts in rural Alberta, and additional help and research needs.

Bossort, P. (Ed.) (1990). *Literacy 2000: Conference summary. Make the next ten years matter*. Victoria: Province of British Columbia, Multiculturalism and Citizenship Canada, and Douglas College.

This conference summary contains the texts of numerous presentations categorized under the following headings: defining literacy (conception and strategies), meeting learner needs (perspectives and directions), reaching out (literacy and the community), interpreting literacy (culture and context), working it through (literacy and the job site), and training instructors (experience and accreditation). The report concludes with overall observations and issues that cut across the conference streams, explicitly: literacy as a learners' movement, workplace literacy, training for tutors and for paid literacy workers, and funding issues relative to policy and social justice.

Burnaby, B. (1992). "Adult literacy issues in Canada." *Annual review of applied linguistics*, 12:156-171.

This journal article is a brief overview of some issues related to adult literacy in Canada, specifically related to the research conducted in the field. The issues are divided into the major categories of definitions of literacy, policy overviews and surveys, literacy and its impact on Canadian institutions, issues of access for literacy learners as a group and for specific sub-groups, adult learning and classroom practice, and plain language. Burnaby concludes that from the available research, action must be taken to address the issues.

Canadian Business Task Force on Literacy. (1988). *Measuring the costs of illiteracy in Canada*. Ottawa, ON: Department of the Secretary of State.

The purpose of the study was to determine the costs of illiteracy in Canada and to propose various actions to reduce or eliminate this problem.

Centre for educational research and innovation. (1992). *Adult illiteracy and economic performance*. Paris: Author.

This report represents the first OECD study on adult illiteracy. It is an attempt to bring together what is known about adult illiteracy in industrialized countries. Annex 1 and Annex 2 of this report provide discussions of Canada's survey of Literacy Skills Used in Daily Activities (LSUDA) specifically relating to the survey preparation and measurement issues.

Challis, S. (1991). *Methods to increase the number of successful transfers between programs by students in adult literacy programming*. (Research report for the Literacy Workers' Alliance of Manitoba). Multiculturalism and Citizenship Canada.

The Challis study investigated, from the learners' perspectives, the potential for student transfers between community-based and institution-based literacy programming. Included in this study were profiles of 14 students enroled in literacy programs.

Chisman, F.P. (1989). *Jump start: The federal role in adult literacy.* Southport Institute for Policy Analysis.

This is the final report of the project on adult literacy sponsored by the Southport Institute for Policy Analysis. It contains a number of specific recommendations that are explicitly American but which have applicability elsewhere. In order to capitalize on an opportunity that may not come again, Chisman states that America:

1. establish clear national goals and track progress toward them;
2. create stronger intellectual, political and institutional focal points for the basic skills effort that will strengthen its intellectual underpinnings and create more effective and better-co-ordinated systems of service delivery and policy;
3. focus squarely on the problems of adults and on workforce literacy;
4. demand systems that produce large gains in basic skills and hold them accountable for achieving those gains;
5. make the necessary investments in technology, training and administration to bring all this about; and
6. build on the strengths of the field now in place and on our existing knowledge base.

Council of Ministers of Education. (1990). *Adult literacy: Canada 1990.* Toronto/Ottawa: author in collaboration with the Department of the Secretary of State of Canada.

This report is a summary of answers to a questionnaire of the International Bureau of Education, responded to in Canada by the above agencies in preparation for the International Conference on Education in Geneva, 1990. The report is divided into the following sections: current trends in elementary education and adult literacy work; political and organizational measures with a view to the eradication or massive reduction of illiteracy; structures, program content and literacy teaching methods; international co-operation; and recommendations. The report provides a very comprehensive and readable description of adult literacy initiatives in Canada just before International Literacy Year.

DesLauriers, R. C. (1990). *The impact of employee illiteracy on Canadian business.* (Report 58-90-E). Ottawa: Conference Board of Canada.

A study of the effect of employee illiteracy on Canadian businesses was conducted. Interviews were conducted with human resource or general managers from a random sample of 2,000 Canadian establishments and 300 head offices (note - 25% return). The results of the study suggest that Canadian businesses are aware of illiteracy in the workplace and many businesses are attempting to provide remedies. It is suggested that as the workplace becomes more complex educational changes are required to ensure higher levels of literacy in the workplace.

Economic Council of Canada. (1992). *A lot to learn: Education and training in Canada.* Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services Canada.

This statement by the Economic Council of Canada presents a discussion, regarding education and training in Canada, of quality issues, the learning continuum, the teaching profession, costs and financing, and an international perspective. It concludes with a number of targets and directions for change toward a comprehensive, open, responsive and relevant education system.

Fagan , W. T. (1990, May). *Literacy for participation in the economy.* Paper presented at the Annual Convention of the Canadian Council of Teachers of English. Halifax, NS.

The paper considers the relationship between the effectiveness of literacy programs and the domain or situation in which they are offered. Fagan indicated that research of successful literacy programs has shown that such programs tend to be integrated with job development and job-related readings.

Gabriel Dumont Institute of Native Studies and Applied Research Inc. (undated). *Literacy for Metis and non-status Indian peoples: A national strategy.* Saskatoon: Author.

The purpose of this study is to determine the condition of literacy programming for Metis and non-status Indian peoples in Canada. Research identified successful approaches and programs currently in existence as well as deficiencies and needs. Recommendations for action have been provided in the areas of policy, programs, and strategies to meet the literacy needs of these peoples.

Harb, M. (1991). *Literacy forum 1991 report*. Ottawa, ON: author.

This report is a summary of the discussion and recommendations of a gathering convened by Member of Parliament Mac Harb and attended by individuals representing more than 120 organizations. The discussion and recommendations were premised on the notion that the adult illiteracy problem is two-dimensional, having both a remediation component and a prevention component. Thus many recommendations were directed at the current education system. The targets for recommendations were loosely grouped in the following manner: government, business, educators, media, community/interest groups, and society.

Hautecoeur, J. P. (Ed.). (1990). *Alpha 90*. Hamburg, Germany: UNESCO Institute for Education.

The purpose of this publication was to consider the field of literacy and provide information about current research and programs in the European Community and North America.

Hunter, L. (1990). *A Search for the meaning of becoming literate: An interpretive inquiry*. Victoria, BC: National Literacy Secretariat and B.C. Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology.

The purpose of this project was to investigate what it is like to become literate and to explore the relationship of this experience to the life of the educator. This study utilizes a phenomenological orientation to focus on the personal experiences of three students and a teacher in an attempt to determine what becoming literate means to them.

International Reading Association. (1991). *Launching the literacy decade: Awareness into action*. Conference report: Second North American Conference on Adult and Adolescent Literacy, Banff, Alberta, March 1991.

This report contains the texts of the featured speakers, ranging from the Director of the National Literacy Secretariat to adult students. Included, as well, are the statements of issues and recommendations generated by the participants, categorized in the following manner: technology and literacy, at-risk adolescents, ABE/GED and correctional education, aboriginal literacy, workforce literacy, community/school connections, intergenerational literacy and multiculturalism/ESL literacy.

Jones, S., Faulk, J., Cummins, J., Norton, M., Nahanee, R., & Tardif, J. C. (1991, September). *The future contributions to literacy in Canada*. Papers for consideration at the workshops for the special meeting of the sub-commission of education on "the future contributions to literacy in Canada".

Five papers relating to literacy issues in Canada comprise this document. These papers relate to the future contributions to literacy in Canada and include topics that include: Schools and Literacy; Myths About Literacy; Literacy and Illiteracy; the Case of the Official Languages Minorities in Canada; Voluntarism in Literacy; and Literacy and Aboriginal Peoples.

Konrad, A. G. (Ed.). (1991). Everyone's challenge. *Proceedings of the 1990 Literacy Conference*. (pp. 1-86). Edmonton, Alberta: University of Alberta.

This publication contains transcriptions of the conference opening, the keynote addresses, and a sample of the workshop presentations from the 1990 Literacy Conference in Edmonton, Alberta.

Movement for Canadian Literacy. (1990). *Organizing adult literacy and basic education in Canada: A policy and practice discussion document*. Ottawa: author.

This document is aimed at stimulating discussion about policy relative to the organizing and provision of adult literacy and basic education in Canada. Following a statement of principles of good practice, it contains specific recommendations under the headings of plan of development (regional and local co-ordination), program delivery (elements of practice, program accessibility, resources and facilities, and staffing), program evaluation, publicizing programs, staff development, research and development, and funding. This document was created with the input and advice of four literacy experts. It recommends mainstreaming adult literacy and basic education with the regular education systems across Canada.

National Literacy Secretariat. (1990). *Partners in literacy. National literacy program. An overview of projects*. Ottawa, ON: Author.

This publication provides an overview of a number of projects and initiatives funded by the National Literacy Program of Canada during 1989 and 1990. This booklet includes a description of several major research projects funded by the National Literacy Program to enhance knowledge about literacy in Canada.

Pollard, M. J. (1991). *PAL Project evaluation* (final report). Lethbridge, AB: University of Lethbridge, Faculty of Education.

This document represents the final report of an evaluation of the PAL (A Partnership Approach to Literacy) Project. This project placed trained volunteer tutors in the public school system with students of low reading ability. The reading style strengths of these students were identified using Carbo's Reading Style Inventory (1988) and students tutoring commenced according to these identified learning styles preferences.

The evaluation of the project included interviews with selected students, tutors, teachers, and parents and questionnaires for all students, tutors, parents, and teachers. This process of evaluation occurred for each of the two years of the project.

Scane, J., Guy, A. M., & Wenstrom, L. (1991). *Think, write, share: Process writing for adult ESL and Basic Education students*. Toronto, ON: Ontario Institute for Studies in Education.

This book describes the results of two research projects that investigated the feasibility of using a process writing approach to teach writing to adult students. This research included an analysis of the effectiveness of the approach with and without computer-assisted learning strategies.

Shohet, L. (1992). Issues in workplace/workforce literacy in 1992. *Adult literacy: What the research says*. Montreal: Quebec Reading Councils.

From the meager research in the field, Shohet presents a discussion of the following issues: definitions and terminology, technology and employment (assumptions and implications), the downside of literacy programs, the need for evaluations to examine program impact on workplace structure, acceptance of responsiblity, educating the business community, and the role of volunteers. Shohet concludes that there is a need to maintain public awareness but to address specific issues and target particular audiences, especially regarding some of the misconceptions.

Statistics Canada. (1991). *Adult literacy in Canada: Results of a national study*. Ottawa, ON.

This report of literacy skills in Canada represents the first such measurement by Statistics Canada. The first section of this report provides an overview of the national survey entitled, "Survey of Literacy Skills Used in Daily Activities" (LSUDA) (Statistics Canada, 1989). The second section includes interpretations of the survey results by various specialists in fields relating to literacy such as health, labour, and adult education.

Taylor, M. C. & Draper, J. A. (Eds.). (1989). *Adult literacy perspectives*. Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press.

This publication provides a variety of current theories and practices in the field of literacy and adult basic skills. Submissions from a wide range of scholars, practitioners and analysts have been included in this book.

Taylor, M. C., Lewe, G. R., & Draper, J. A. (Eds.). (1991). *Basic skills for the workplace*. Toronto, ON: Culture Concepts.

The intent of this book is to provide a guide for developing and implementing workplace literacy and basic skills instruction programs. The four major themes of the book include: nderstanding the need for workplace literacy, identifying workplace training needs, examples of practice in workplace basic skills training and discovering approaches for program development.

Taylor, M.C., Shohet, L., & MacLeod, C. (1992). *Partnerships in workplace literacy: Refuelling the engine*. Paper presented at the American Association for Adult and Continuing Education in Montreal.

This paper outlines some of the problems related to workplace literacy, i.e. very limited number of programs in relation to the need; the difficulty of operationalizing partnerships between business, labor and education; the inactivity of the business community in initiating programs; misconceptions about literacy; the need for a consumer's guide to workplace literacy; the labour perspective on basic skills as it differs from management perspective; changing literacy demands in the modern workplace; the need for a balance between human needs and economic needs. The conclusion of the paper is a list of lessons learned including: getting to know the structure of the organization; conducting a situational analysis; negotiation; and effective program evaluation.

APPENDIX E:

Faxed Survey to Literacy Community

1. **Methodology**
2. **Questionnaire with tabulated responses**
3. **Issues and concerns (questions and responses)**
4. **Recommendations (questions and responses)**
5. **Interpretation of the responses**

1. METHODOLOGY

1.1 lists of issues/concerns and potential recommendations for action were generated from the literature in the field

1.2 a two-page questionnaire with introductory text was faxed to 72 individuals with direct connections to the adult literacy community

1.3 these individuals were students, instructors, administrators, researchers, policy makers, volunteer tutors, advocates

1.4 31 responses were received within the limited response time of 6 days.

2. QUESTIONNAIRE WITH TABULATED RESPONSES

Please indicate the degree to which, in your personal opinion, the following are significant issues and concerns relative to adult literacy in Canada at this time. In addition, please circle the numbers of the five issues you view as most pressing.

	Strongly agree				Strongly disagree
	1	2	3	4	5
1. varying definitions of literacy	8	9	8	5	4
2. disregard for students' opinion	6	11	9	6	2
3. public perception of "illiterates"	10	12	6	4	0
4. promises of "quick fixes"	14	6	5	6	1
5. inadequate number of programs	17	7	8	1	0
6. ad hoc funding and impermanence	23	6	2	0	1
7. insufficient financial resources	23	8	2	0	1
8. shortage of Canadian materials	10	9	7	7	0
9. under-utilization of computers	2	5	12	11	4
10. difficulty with testing/assessment	8	9	9	7	1
11. no standard curriculum	2	4	10	12	6
12. high rate of non-completions	3	16	6	4	3
13. insufficient number of personnel	9	14	6	1	4
14. inadequate training for personnel	7	14	7	3	2
15. certification of personnel	3	6	15	2	3
16. bureaucratizing of the field	8	6	9	3	2
17. questionable working conditions	5	10	11	1	2
18. over-reliance on volunteers	10	9	11	2	0
19. cost as a barrier to students	7	7	12	5	2
20. incentives for potential students	4	10	13	3	1
21. special obstacles for women	6	8	15	4	0
22. special obstacles for workers	5	13	9	4	0
23. certification for students	2	10	12	5	4
24. transferability for students	8	11	9	3	1
25. myriad of related social problems	18	9	6	0	0
26. confusion with ESL	3	5	17	2	4
27. number of special needs groups	5	12	10	1	2
28. shortage of Canadian research	2	9	14	4	4
29. shortage of research in French	3	4	14	7	3
30. lack of program evaluations	3	11	14	3	2
31. no uniform reporting systems	4	11	8	5	2
32. lack of program accountability	1	17	11	4	0

	Strongly agree				Strongly disagree
	1	2	3	4	5
33. limited information sharing	5	11	9	7	0
34. relative "newness" of the field	5	2	13	12	1
35. emphasis on economic implications	7	12	11	0	1
36. no coordination at national level	9	6	7	8	2
37. no national policy/goals	11	9	5	7	0
38. no lobby for literacy nationally	8	7	10	5	1
39. "turf wars" for control	11	6	8	6	1
40. marginalization of literacy field	8	12	7	2	2
41. limited links with "education"	7	11	8	2	5
42. insufficient interest by business	10	10	10	3	0
43. inadequacy of current school system	9	10	6	4	1
44. insufficient interest by the media	7	5	12	7	2
45. apparent stalemate in activity	6	7	12	5	3

Please indicate the degree to which, in your personal opinion, the following are significant recommendations that should be made relative to adult literacy in Canada at this time. In addition, please circle the numbers of the five you view as most pressing.

	Strongly agree				Strongly disagree
	1	2	3	4	5
1. more research at universities	1	4	13	6	6
2. more program-based research	6	15	8	2	1
3. systematize assessment	4	7	9	3	7
4. systematize teaching approach	1	4	6	10	11
5. retain diversity of approach	17	9	3	0	1
6. set national goals/policy	13	6	6	2	4
7. leave literacy to the provinces	1	9	10	4	5
8. systematize program evaluation	4	7	10	4	5
9. establish national coordination	6	4	13	4	4
10. involve students in planning	11	12	7	1	0
11. national awareness campaign	10	8	8	3	2

	Strongly agree				Strongly disagree
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
12. mainstream ABE in education system	6	11	8	2	1
13. recognize literacy as a human right	20	7	2	2	1
14. eliminate use of word "illiterate"	11	8	7	1	1
15. examine incentives for participation	8	11	7	0	2
16. liaise with teachers of children	10	11	10	0	0
17. increase the use of technology	6	6	15	3	0
18. develop literacy leader training	12	13	5	0	0
19. emphasize training of the employed	8	14	7	1	1
20. emphasize training for the unemployed	12	15	2	1	1
21. demand gains in student achievement	2	7	13	4	3
22. create a national excellence centre	3	4	9	6	7
23. establish undergraduate degrees in literacy education	6	12	7	3	2
24. enforce the use of clear language in government and legal documents	18	12	0	1	0
25. invest more in literacy education	28	1	1	0	0

Please add any issues or recommendations that you don't find in these lists. Thank you for your cooperation, especially on such short notice!

3. INTERPRETATIONS RE: ISSUES AND CONCERNS

1. The following issues were felt to be most significant by respondents:

   - public perception of "illiterates"
   - promises of "quick fixers"
   - inadequate number of programs
   - ad hoc funding and impermanence
   - insufficient financial resources
   - shortage of Canadian materials
   - over-reliance on volunteers
   - transferability for students
   - myriad of related social problems
   - no national policy/goals
   - "turf wars" for control
   - insufficient interest by business
   - insufficient number of personnel
   - inadequate training for personnel

2. The following issues were not felt to be very significant by respondents:

   - no standard curriculum
   - under-utilization of computers
   - certification of personnel
   - confusion with ESL
   - shortage of Canadian research
   - shortage of research in French
   - relative "newness" of the field

3. The following issues were felt to be of moderate significance:

   - lack of program evaluations
   - no uniform reporting systems
   - lack of program accountability
   - limited information sharing
   - emphasis on economic implications
   - no lobby for literacy nationally
   - marginalization of literacy field
   - limited links with "education"
   - "turf wars" for control

4. The issues that were considered, by the majority of respondents, to be the most significant, in order of importance were:

- ad hoc funding and impermanence
- insufficient financial resources
- myriad of related social problems

5. The issues that were considered, by the majority of the respondents, to be the least significant (i.e. received no votes as being one of five most important concerns), were:

- disregard for students' opinion
- under-utilization of computers
- no standard curriculum
- high rate of non-completions
- cost as a barrier to students
- special obstacles for workers
- certification for students
- confusion with ESL
- shortage of research in French
- relative "newness" of the field
- no lobby for literacy nationally
- apparent stalemate in activity

6. The majority of the issues were deemed as being somewhat important, i.e. each received at least one vote as being one of the five most important concerns.

4. INTERPRETATIONS: RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The following topics were recommendations considered by the respondents to be of significance:

- retain diversity of approach
- set national goals/policy
- involve students in planning
- national awareness campaign
- recognize literacy as a human right
- eliminate use of word "illiterate"
- liaise with teachers of children

- develop literacy leader training
- emphasize training of the employed
- emphasize training for the unemployed
- enforce the use of clear language in government and legal documents
- invest more in literacy education

2. The following topics were recommendations considered by the respondents to be of lesser significance:

   - more research at universities
   - systematize assessment
   - systematize teaching approach
   - leave literacy to the provinces
   - systematize program evaluation
   - establish national coordination
   - demand gains in student achievement
   - create a national excellence centre

3. The recommendations that the majority of respondents thought were most important, in descending order, were:

   - invest more in literacy education
   - recognize literacy as a human right
   - retain diversity of approach
   - set national goals/policy

4. The recommendations that the majority of respondents thought were least important (i.e. received no votes as being one of the five most important) were:

   - systematize teaching approach
   - leave literacy to the provinces
   - systematize program evaluation

5. The recommendations that received moderate attention were:

- examine incentives for participation
- liaise with teachers of children
- develop literacy leader training
- enforce the use of clear language in government and legal documents
- emphasize training of the employed
- emphasize training for the unemployed

APPENDIX F:

Creating Adult Literacy Policy

As has been noted, Canada has no national policy on adult literacy. This may be for two obvious reasons: first, as an educational issue, most provinces and territories have or are in the process of creating localized policies; and, second, the area is so complicated, that the process is daunting to say the very least. The problems associated with the creation of a national policy may be categorized in the following way:

- the complexity and artificiality of the problem;
- the variety of conflicting assumptions and values related to literacy and illiteracy; and
- the variety of stakeholders and the related claims.

Regardless of these problems, it is recommended by some stakeholders in adult literacy that a national policy be created.

1. THE COMPLEXITY OF THE POLICY PROBLEM

What is the formal problem? In Canada, there are a number of adults who lack the basic academic, job and life skills that are necessary for full participation in the sociopolitical and economic environment of an industrialized country. Both individuals and society benefit from increased basic skills of these individuals for whom there is a need to provide appropriate learning opportunities, adequate support systems, and productive involvement opportunities that take into account the myriad of issues surrounding adult functional illiteracy.

Development and analysis of ABE policy is complex because this is a classic example of an ill-structured problem: there are many decision makers, unlimited alternatives, conflicting values, unpredictable outcomes and incalculable probabilities (Dunn 1981, p. 103). The substantive problem appears to be that there is a discrepancy between the literacy skills of some adult Canadians and the skills expected or required of them. This reflects:

1. the unrealized values, those of the dominant culture and the authorities, experienced by some individuals and by some components of society;

2. the needs of those individuals and of society relative to the discrepancies; and

3. the opportunities for solving the problem that are as yet unavailable or unaccessible.

Public action is needed in order to attain these unrealized values, needs and opportunities, and to deal with the multiplicity of stakeholders, the wide-ranging interdependence with other problems, and the multifaceted dynamics of the problem.

This policy problem is excessively ill-structured for all the classic reasons (Dunn 1981):

1. inherent in adult literacy are a variety of competing societal values;

2. current policy makers appear to maximize their own values and to be unconcerned about societal preferences in seeking to satisfy immediate demands for a solution;

3. the commitment of resources to existing policies and programs prevents policymakers from considering new and creative alternatives since previous decisions limit present options;

4. the time and effort required to collect relevant information on all possible alternatives is costly and intimidating;

5. policy makers and analysts are unable to predict the range of positive and negative consequences associated with each policy alternative, and the current result is the choice of courses of action that maintain the status quo.

Therefore, the creation of adult literacy policy in Canada must take into account the classic characteristics of a policy problem which, according to Dunn (1981) are the interdependence, subjectivity and artificiality of the policy problems.

- In the case of adult literacy in Canada, the interdependence of illiteracy with poverty, unemployment, crime and other social problems indicates that a holistic approach is necessary. Efforts to isolate aspects of the problem may be temporarily satisfying but the policy problem will be only partially solved.

- The policy system surrounding adult literacy in Canada, the stakeholders, environment and public policies combine to selectively and subjectively define, classify and explain the problem. It is clear that there are as many different solutions as definitions of the problem; the dynamics are almost overwhelming.

- Because the problem is a product of human judgement, socially constructed, maintained and changed, it is an artificial problem. For this reason, it is in danger of being eclipsed by other pressing social problems.

The complexity of the policy problem is exacerbated by the number and variety of conflicting assumptions and values.

2. CONFLICTING ASSUMPTIONS AND VALUES

A major issue in both the definition and the resolution of the problem of adult illiteracy rests in attempting to accommodate the conflicting views of adult illiteracy. Differing values and context, based on conflicting assumptions and perspectives, result in a variety of incompatible claims and approaches. The following are examples.

Based on the problems created for individuals and for society, illiteracy is a scourge to be eradicated (Roy-Singh 1990). This view rests on such assumptions as:

- the negative consequences of illiteracy for individuals and for society are real, not hypothetical;
- the illiterate is inarticulate and helpless;
- adult illiteracy can be totally eradicated by some method or other.

These assumptions reflect two perspectives: that this social problem is a consequence of factors present in the immediate environment of victims of the problem; and that this social problem is a consequence of moral weaknesses or flaws in the adults with literacy skill deficiencies.

Based on the positive value of literacy, enhanced literacy ability enables improvement in the human condition, for individuals and for society (Chisholm 1988; Bhola 1990).

Assumptions underlying this view may be:

- opportunities and resources exist for all individuals to experience an enhanced lifestyle, i.e. that jobs, food, education and peace exist for all;
- literacy is required to exercise fully the rights of citizenship; and
- such social problems as crime, poverty, unemployment and violence can be reduced by upgrading the educational levels of many on welfare, in prison, or otherwise dependent.

These assumptions reflect two perspectives: that the social problem of adult illiteracy is a product of historical mistakes and that illiteracy is inevitable under current societal circumstances.

Based on empirical measures, illiteracy ceases to be a problem if the skills of all adults experiencing difficulties are increased through educational endeavors (Brand 1987). This view is based on such assumptions as:

- illiteracy is an isolated problem, and
- literacy is a solely educational issue, and
- literacy requirements do not increase or change.

These claims reflect predominantly the perspective that illiteracy is created by factors in the literacy and educational environments.

Also based on empirical measures, literacy is essential to economic stability and development (Brizius and Foster 1987).

The claim that, in an industrialized country, illiteracy is most appropriately construed as an economic issue is based on such assumptions as:

- a strong economy requires an educated, well-trained and adaptable labor force,
- functional literacy is a social indicator on a socio-economic index,
- people are a resource in an industrialized country, and
- lifelong learning is desirable and achievable.

These assumptions, too, reflect the perspectives that the environment and the illiteracy problem creates victims. In order to address the problem of adult illiteracy, it is essential to collectively and collaboratively discuss and resolve the dilemma this issue creates.

3. THE VARIETY OF STAKEHOLDERS AND THE RELATED CLAIMS

In the creation of policy relevant to adult literacy, there are a variety of stakeholders who must be included and who put forward different arguments.

In the case of literacy and basic education for adults, it is conceivable that all individuals and society in its entirety should be included; however, more specifically, the stakeholders are in three major categories:

1. input (policy development and decision making, resource procurement):

    - elected officials (MLA's and specific provincial ministries; MP's and specific federal ministries),
    - appointed officials (bureaucrats and consultants in various ministries and secretariats),
    - program hosts and sponsors (administrators in educational institutions and management of non-educational organizations),
    - lobby groups and special interest groups,
    - potential students (those who are employed, forcibly unemployed, and/or who choose to not work for pay), and
    - researchers;

2. process (program participants):

    - educational support services (curriculum developers, publishers, testing and evaluation consultants, subject area specialists),
    - student support services (counsellors, finance services, family, support service specialists),
    - actual students, and
    - program instructors, volunteer tutors and administrators;

3. outcomes (recipients of programs/process):

    - former students (graduates and drop-outs),
    - employers and potential employers,
    - support to the unemployed (social services, UIC, employment counsellors), and
    - general support services (mental health, public health).

This is by no means an exhaustive list. There is a distinction between those that should be involved and those that are; between those that identify themselves as stakeholders and those that may be as yet unaware.

The mode of argument that might be expected from each category of stakeholder logically is somewhat different. Not surprisingly, each could begin with authoritative claims; each assumes a position of achieved or ascribed status as producer of policy-relevant information. The strongest voices come from the most powerful, the elected and appointed officials; however, students are beginning to assert their role as authorities. Input stakeholders assume that since they control the finances, the other resources, and the decision-making processes, their view of the problem is most pressing; politicians and bureaucrats tend towards the claim

that undereducated adults are an economic problem. Process stakeholders assert that undereducated adults represent a human rights issue. Output stakeholders reiterate the economic assumptions.

Intuitive arguments, those based on insight, are largely made by process and output stakeholders. These arguments are based largely on experiences that input stakeholders have little insight into. Common assumptions are that the life of an individual is substantially improved with more formal education and improved basic skills; and that learners will submit to the superior knowledge of instructors and program organizers.

Analycentric arguments, those based on method, are presented largely by input and process stakeholders who make claims on the basis of assumptions about the validity of methods or rules employed. A common analycentric assumption related to ABE is that educational opportunity, rather than employment opportunity or relief from poverty, is the appropriate methodology for solving the problem. Other analycentric assumptions are that skills acquired through training in workplace literacy skills will transfer to "real-life" literacy demands, and that increasing the literacy skills of employees would simply increase productivity and reduce literacy-related problems. Output stakeholders often have a different view of these analycentric arguments.

Explanatory arguments, claims based on cause and effect, are made by all stakeholders. Input stakeholders typically make assumptions regarding cause and create policy for the purpose of achieving a certain effect. Assumptions are frequently made about the causes of illiteracy in adults, ranging from learning disabilities through intellectual inabilities, and about the problems that illiteracy causes (poverty and unemployment for example). Output stakeholders make assumptions about the effects of enhanced literacy, for example, that program graduates will enjoy enhanced employment opportunities and/or more fulfilling lives. Process stakeholders attempt recruitment and instruction processes based on perceptions about cause, assuming, for example, that greater numbers of potential students can be found in certain socio-economic classes or that students need individualized programs. Typically, explanatory arguments in ABL/ABE are based on unwarranted assumptions because there is little emperical research in the field.

Due to the lack of research, pragmatic assertions, those based on arguments from motivation, parallel case, or analogy are commonly made by stakeholders. Input stakeholders make the assumption that if, for example, increased levels of financial support couldn't solve a social problem such as unemployment, then the same may be true for this problem. Some process stakeholders assume that adult basic education students will, essentially, be the same as other adult students in terms of motivation, needs and abilities. Pragmatic arguments are often based on qualitative measurements and value relativism which are more readily available in the ABE field.

Finally, value-critical arguments based on ethics are made by all stakeholders. Virtually all enlightened stakeholders, on humanist principles or value grounds, decry the claim that illiteracy is a disease to be eradicated and ascribe to the claim that the human condition is improved through increased literacy skills in adults. Such value-critical arguments as the evil of education and economic inequities, the necessity of full democratic participation, the worth of individuals and of education abound in the discussion of ABE problems and policies.

The myriad of assumptions which underly policy in ABE reflect every conceivable perspective and mode of argument. Most assumptions can be challenged simply by drawing on a conflicting perspective or argument. It is little wonder that few are eager to tackle the process of ABE policy development.

4. ATTEMPTING NATIONAL ADULT LITERACY POLICY

Adult literacy and basic education as a policy problem has become so intricate that the process of policy development is just short of being totally stalemated. Thus, it may be necessary to develop a new paradigm in which to view ABL/ABE in order that stakeholders can get on with solving the problem. Perhaps the old metaphors of literacy as scourge or as accident can be replaced with new metaphors of literacy as transformation, as lifelong learning, as world peace. The development of formal ABE policy may be necessary, not only to maintain the momentum generated by International Literacy Year, but to prevent the problem of adult illiteracy from becoming eclipsed by other pressing social issues.

In terms of adult literacy policy in Canada, application of the following criteria are useful in judging and recommending policy action.

1. The Kaldor-Hicks criterion: will the policy action result in a net gain in socio-economic efficiency and can those who gain compensate the losers?

2. The Pareto Criterion: will the policy action result in at least one person being better off and no persons being worse off?

3. The Rawls Criterion: will the policy action result in a gain in welfare for the members of society who are worst off?